

Lisa Strübel

**Between prophecy, politics and pragmatism – denazification
in the Lutheran Church in Hamburg**

aus:

Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte (20. Jahrhundert)

Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte in Aufsätzen, Teil 5 (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte Hamburgs, Band 26). Herausgegeben von Rainer Hering und Inge Mager

S. 297–353

Impressum

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Abbildung auf Schutzumschlag und Buchdecke:

Ruine der Hauptkirche St. Nikolai nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg
(Staatsarchiv Hamburg)

ISBN 978-3-937816-46-3 (Printversion)

ISSN 0518-2107 (Printversion)

© 2008 Hamburg University Press, Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek
Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, Deutschland

Produktion: Elbe-Werkstätten GmbH, Hamburg, Deutschland

<http://www.ew-gmbh.de>

Gestaltung von Schutzumschlag und Buchdecke: Liliane Oser, Hamburg

Hergestellt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der
Nordelbischen Ev.-Luth. Kirche, der Bischofskanzlei und des Ev.-Luth.
Kirchenkreisverbandes Hamburg

Inhalt

<i>Maria Jepsen</i> Geleitwort	7
<i>Rainer Hering und Inge Mager</i> Vorwort	9
<i>Rainer Hering</i> Einleitung: Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert	11
<i>Rainer Hering</i> Auf dem Weg in die Moderne?	37
Die Hamburgische Landeskirche in der Weimarer Republik	
<i>Rainer Hering</i> Kirche und Universität	75
Die Anfänge der evangelischen Studierendenseelsorge und akademischer Gottesdienste an der Hamburger Universität in der Weimarer Republik und im „Dritten Reich“	
<i>Rainer Hering</i> Frauen auf der Kanzel?	105
Die Auseinandersetzungen um Frauenordination und Gleichberechtigung der Theologinnen in der Hamburger Landeskirche	
<i>Rainer Hering</i> Bischofskirche zwischen „Führerprinzip“ und Luthertum	155
Die Evangelisch-lutherische Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate und das „Dritte Reich“	
<i>Herwarth von Schade</i> Das Landeskirchenamt in Hamburg	201
<i>Holger Wilken</i> Die katholische Gemeinde in (Alt-)Hamburg 1933–1945	243

Holger Wilken

Die Gründung des Verbandes der römisch-katholischen Kirchengemeinden in Hamburg (Bistum Osnabrück) 1958–1963 263

Ursula Büttner

Wegweiser für ein Orientierung suchendes Volk? 279
Die evangelische Kirche Hamburgs in der Nachkriegszeit

Lisa Strübel

Between prophecy, politics and pragmatism – denazification
in the Lutheran Church in Hamburg 297

Christian Albrecht

Auf der Schwelle zur Erfahrungsoffenheit 355
Zur Praktischen Theologie des Hamburger Pfarrers und Tübinger Professors
Walter Uhsadel (1900–1985)

Rainer Hering

Vom Umgang mit theologischen Außenseitern im 20. Jahrhundert 375

Beatrix Teucher

Katechetisches Amt – Pädagogisch-Theologisches Institut: Partner
an der Schnittstelle von Schule und Kirche 399

Rainer Hering

Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in der Hamburger
Gesellschaft seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges 431

Rainer Hering

Die Hamburger Bischöfe von 1933 bis 1992 461

Bibliographie 481

Personenregister 501

Bildnachweis 515

Beitragende 517

Between prophecy, politics and pragmatism – denazification in the Lutheran Church in Hamburg

Lisa Strübel

1 Introduction

The churches in Germany were accorded a prominent role in the aftermath of capitulation and the spiritual and administrative vacuum which followed. The Allies viewed them as spokesmen of a defeated nation, instances of moral and spiritual regeneration and partners in the hoped-for democratic new beginning. They were the only institutions to have survived the ‘Third Reich’ broadly intact and were perceived in many circles as having been important centres of opposition.¹ The participation of the church was once again sought after a period in which clerical influence had been systematically excluded. The churches were also trusted by wide sectors of a disillusioned and disoriented population, who hoped to find guidance and stability in the midst of chaos. The Hamburg pastor Paul Kreye (1895–1976), who had belonged to the *Bruderrat* of the Confessing Church in Hamburg, reported to Bishop Franz Tügel (1888–1946) in early July 1945 that congregation members “stehen [...] den Geschehnissen weithin ratlos

* Erstveröffentlichung in diesem Band.

¹ See e. g. Clemens Vollnhals, *Die Evangelische Kirche zwischen Traditionswahrung und Neuorientierung*, in: Martin Broszat / Klaus-Dietmar Henke / Hans Woller (eds.), *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruches in Deutschland (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte 26)*, Munich 1988, pp. 113–167; Werner Jochmann, *Evangelische Kirche und politische Neuorientierung in Deutschland 1945*, in: idem, *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland 1870–1945*, Hamburg 1988, pp. 298–315 and 435–439, esp. pp. 301–302; Jörg Thierfelder, *Die Kirchenpolitik der vier Besatzungsmächte und die evangelische Kirche nach der Kapitulation 1945*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 18, 1992, pp. 4–21, esp. p. 6.

gegenüber und suchen nach einer Antwort."² Church services were packed. Many people who had left the church during the 'Third Reich' sought to return; between 1945 and 1947 more people (re-)joined the church than left, before the opposite trend, which has never been reversed, set in.³ Euphoric churchmen prophesied the 'hour of the church'.⁴

The credibility of the stances and statements of the church, not least its criticism of the denazification process in the state, was closely linked to the manner in which the church undertook the task of freeing itself from Nazi influence. In recent years, a number of regional studies have suggested the limitations of 'self-purification' in many *Landeskirchen*, and established that there was widespread personnel continuity at the level of both leadership and parochial clergy from the Weimar Republic through the 'Third Reich' and into the Federal Republic.⁵

This article focuses on the process and results of denazification – or, to adopt church terminology, 'self-purification' – of the Lutheran Church in Hamburg.⁶ We see the problems of execution of military government policy towards purging the churches and the inconsistencies between and

² Archives of the Ecclesiastical District of Old-Hamburg (Archiv des Kirchenkreises Alt-Hamburg [KKrA HH]), Dreifaltigkeitsgemeinde Hamm, Korrespondenz Kreye VI, Briefe an die Gemeinde und an den Landesbischof, Pastor Paul Kreye to Franz Tügel 3 July 1945. See also Ursula Büttner, *Orientierungssuche in heillosen Zeiten: der Beitrag der evangelischen Kirche*, in: Ursula Büttner / Bernd Nellessen (eds.), *Die zweite Chance. Der Übergang von der Diktatur zur Demokratie in Hamburg 1945–1949* (Publikationen der Katholischen Akademie Hamburg 16), Hamburg 1997, pp. 85–107, reprinted in this volume.

³ State Archives of the Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Staatsarchiv Hamburg [StA HH]), 131-1 II Senatskanzlei – Gesamtregistratur II, 5749, no. 57, Übersicht über Kirchengaustritts- und Kirchengauintrittsbewegungen innerhalb der Evangelischen Lutherischen Landeskirche 1945–1951.

⁴ Hans Meiser argued in a circular to the clergy as early as 22 January 1945: "Die Stunde der Kirche ist nicht vergangen, sondern neu im Kommen." Hans Meiser, *Kirche, Kampf und Christusglaube. Anfechtungen und Antworten eines Lutheraners*, eds. Fritz Meiser and Gertrude Meiser, Munich 1982, p. 171. That such hopes of the hour of the church were common among Hamburg pastors is suggested by Büttner, *Orientierungssuche*, p. 86.

⁵ See particularly Gerhard Besier, "Selbstreinigung" unter britischer Besatzungsherrschaft. Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers und ihr Landesbischof Marahrens 1945–1947, Göttingen 1986; Clemens Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung 1945–1949. Die Last der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit*, Munich 1989; Clemens Vollnhals, *Entnazifizierung und Selbstreinigung im Urteil der evangelischen Kirche. Dokumente und Reflexionen 1945–1949*, Munich 1989.

even within occupation zones; the standpoints of churchmen and the eventual results point back to the traditions of the church and to the nature of the church conflict in Hamburg, and suggest the reassertion of many old agendas in the post-war period. These factors, in concert with the concrete demands of the situation, worked against a purge not just of pastors who had supported many of the political tenets of Nazism but also of those who had propagated radical German Christian ideas. The limitations of this process influenced the pastoral representation and development of the church into the 1960s.

2 British perceptions of and policy towards the churches

Before turning to the development of policy towards the denazification of the church in Hamburg and its results, a few words should be devoted to British policy towards the churches, not least to enable policy in Hamburg to be placed within the wider context of Allied religious policy in this sphere. Research into the religious affairs policies of the Allies remains a desideratum of historiography, the previous neglect of which might be seen as paralleling the neglect of religious affairs policy planning by the Allies.⁷ There is no comprehensive study of the principles and development of religious affairs policy, although a number of regional studies look at trends within it, and highlight the inconsistencies that marked it.⁸

Despite common traits in jointly 'planned' policy, particularly between British and American policy, the policies of the Allied nations towards the

⁶ For a discussion of the process of self-purification, as well as ecclesiastical stances towards the denazification of state, see also Lisa Strübel, *Continuity and Change in City Protestantism. The Lutheran Church in Hamburg, 1945–1965* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte Hamburgs 23), Hamburg 2005.

⁷ Armin Boyens, *Die Kirchenpolitik der amerikanischen Besatzungsmacht in Deutschland von 1944 bis 1946*, in: Armin Boyens / Martin Greschat / Rudolf von Thadden / Paolo Pombeni, *Kirchen in der Nachkriegszeit. Vier zeitgeschichtliche Beiträge* (Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte B 8), Göttingen 1979, pp. 7–99, here p. 8.

⁸ Besier, "Selbstreinigung"; Vollnhals, Last. See also Jörg Thierfelder, *Die Kirchenpolitik der Besatzungsmacht Frankreich und die Situation der evangelischen Kirche in der französischen Zone*, in: *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 2, 1989, no. 1, pp. 222–238.

churches differed in both theory and practice.⁹ In Britain, detailed knowledge of the situation in the churches was lacking, but most senior military government representatives were united in the belief, as expressed by Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery (1887–1976), that “the German churches can play a great part in the reconstruction of Germany”.¹⁰ The help and advice of the British churches was sought in the planning and execution of religious affairs policy, in contrast to the situation in the American zone.¹¹

Army chaplain William Tindal (1899–1965) was commissioned to write a report on the situation of the churches in Germany and to make concrete suggestions for the development of a policy. He presented this report in September 1945.¹² Tindal, whose conceptions basically reflected the views of the Anglican Church, called for religious affairs to be dealt with through the Religious Affairs Chaplains’ Department (RACHD), a suggestion that was not, in the event, taken up. Leading churchmen continued, however, to possess an important advisory role, not least in the appointment of personnel. Initially matters concerning the churches were dealt with in the Education and Religious Affairs Branch (ERAB), which was one of six departments of the Internal Affairs and Communications Division (IA&C) of the Control Commission for Germany, British Element (CCG/BE). However, it soon became apparent that this organisational apparatus was not sufficient to deal with religious affairs; moreover, leading British churchmen believed that a separate branch was necessary from a prestige point of view. A separate branch for religious affairs was established in January 1946. It had been suggested that this should be called German Church Affairs Branch. On the advice of the Head of Religious Affairs – Colonel Sedgwick, a Roman Catholic – the branch was, however, named Religious Affairs Branch to avoid giving the impression that there was only one church in Germany. Despite the official founding of the Branch, it remained in a state of flux until Autumn 1946. In Hamburg, there was no officer responsible purely for religious affairs until October 1946.

⁹ Thierfelder, *Kirchenpolitik der vier Besatzungsmächte*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁰ Public Record Office (PRO), Kew, London, Foreign Office (FO) 1050/1681, no. 24c, Memorandum of Chief of Staff, British Zone.

¹¹ Thierfelder, *Kirchenpolitik der vier Besatzungsmächte*, p. 12; Boyens, *Kirchenpolitik*, pp. 27–28.

¹² PRO, FO 1050/162, no. 32A, First Impressions of the German Evangelical Church, Memorandum for Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery 21 September 1945.

The history of the Religious Affairs Branch in the British Zone was in fact dogged by lack of personnel and rapid turnover at this level; moreover, the question of its status remained controversial throughout the occupation period, affecting the development and execution of policy. These limitations, alongside suspicion of the churches in Foreign Office circles, seem to have led to churchmen suppressing knowledge of the limitations of the church conflict and portraying a more rosy picture of the Confessing Church in the hope of strengthening the status of religious affairs. This was a charge that was also levelled at George Bell (1883–1958), Bishop of Chichester, by Gerhard Leibholz (1901–1982), Dietrich Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law.¹³

Despite the problematic status of religious affairs in the military government apparatus, the churches were undoubtedly granted a privileged position and considerable freedom; in contrast to most other organisations and parties they were treated with benevolence and trust, not least given the initial assessment of the role of the churches in the 'Third Reich'. The churches were, the *Military Government Handbook* argued, "the only institutions to have withstood the prolonged Nazi effort to destroy or co-ordinate all pre-1933 institutions."¹⁴ This led to high hopes being invested in the churches as agents of renewal and partners in the hoped-for new beginning; the work of the education and religious affairs branch was termed a "crusade" since "it is mainly in their field that hopes of a permanent change in the mental and spiritual outlook of the German nation must rest".¹⁵

Given the potential importance attached to the churches, their denazification occupied a central position in the military government's plans. It was also, of course, a question of security, the emphasis on which is often seen as the decisive principle behind British policy.¹⁶ However, although clergy were not to be exempt from the denazification process, different methods of carrying it out were envisaged. As the *Technical Manual for Education and*

¹³ Gerhard Leibholz charged Bell with consciously downplaying the limitations of the church conflict in a letter of 1 January 1946, in: Lambeth Palace, Bell Papers, vol. 220, pp. 176–178.

¹⁴ PRO, War Office (WO) 22/214, *Military Government Handbook*, point 778.

¹⁵ PRO, WO 220/228, *Technical Manual for Education and Religious Affairs*, February 1945, Introduction.

¹⁶ Ian Turner, *Denazification in the British Zone*, in: idem (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-war Germany. British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945–55*, Oxford – New York – Munich 1989, pp. 239–265, p. 244.

Religious Affairs outlined, “any member of the German clergy guilty of undesirable political activity should, in principle, be treated in the same manner as any other person guilty of such activity”, but it was argued that

“since governmental control of church affairs is less direct than governmental control of education, and also because of the greater questions of public relations involved, removals of churchmen from official positions should not be effected in the same manner as those of educational officials. [...] The removal from ecclesiastical office of a member of the German clergy should, where possible, be concerted through his superior ecclesiastical authority. In the event of the failure of this method, the matter should be referred to the next higher level of Military Government with a view to obtaining action through a higher ecclesiastical authority or, if necessary, the orders of the Supreme Commander.”¹⁷

Policy foresaw freedom of worship and toleration of all religious groupings in so far as they did not encourage Nazi activities or interfere with the accomplishment of the objectives of military government; in fact, this had the result that the German Christian movement was not banned and was even protected in the British zone.¹⁸

3 The reordering of the church leadership in Hamburg in the post-war period

Re-establishment of ordered circumstances and a purge of the clergy in the church presupposed a purge of leaderships in so far as these were compromised, not least if senior churchmen were to assume responsibility for purging the church from Nazi and German Christian elements, as British denazification policy towards the churches foresaw. Whilst most German churchmen in 1945 were united in accepting the need to rid the church of radical German Christian leaders where these were still in control of the

¹⁷ PRO, WO 220/228, Technical Manual for Education and Religious Affairs, February 1945, points 63 and 64.

¹⁸ Besier, “Selbstreinigung”, p. 55.

church government, the situation in Hamburg was complicated by the unclear dividing lines and the history of the church in the preceding period.

Franz Tügel had been elected Bishop as the German Christian and Nazi candidate in March 1934, continuing and intensifying the reorganisation of the church on the lines of the *Führerprinzip* already started by his predecessor as Bishop, Simon Schöffel (1880–1959). However, Tügel had distanced himself from the German Christian movement from late 1934 onwards, leaving it in August 1935. In the course of his efforts to stem the influence of radical German Christian groupings, he had worked towards reconciliation with the Confessing Church in Hamburg, succeeding in winning over the vast majority of pastors to support or at least tolerance of his church government. Although he had remained largely supportive of the political policies of the regime, he had also criticised individual and isolated aspects of Nazi policy. He continued, however, to hold distinctly anti-Semitic views, which led to his supporting and justifying some of the racial policies of the Nazi regime, including the deportation of the Jews.¹⁹

Nevertheless, given the development in his stances Tügel considered the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hamburg to be 'intact' and counted the church among the ranks of the Lutheran opposition to the Nazis represented in the *Lutherrat*. Despite his poor health, which made the exercise of office almost impossible, Tügel initially intended to remain Bishop until at least March 1946, which would have marked his twelfth anniversary as head of the Lutheran Church in Hamburg.²⁰

In most state circles it had been assumed that Tügel would himself draw the consequences of his stances in the preceding period and tender his resignation, sparing the state the task of an undesired intervention in ecclesiastical affairs.²¹ When, two months after the capitulation of Hamburg, Tügel was still in office, the desired principles of liberty and non-intervention could not be upheld and state pressure was exerted to purge the church

¹⁹ On Tügel, see particularly Rainer Hering, *Die Bischöfe Simon Schöffel, Franz Tügel (Hamburgische Lebensbilder in Darstellungen und Selbstzeugnissen 10)*, Hamburg 1995.

²⁰ Hering, *Bischöfe*, p. 85; StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Franz Tügel, *Denkschrift über den Gang der Dinge in der hamburgischen Kirche seit der Besetzung Hamburgs am 3. Mai 1945 mit Anlagen; Korrespondenz bis Dez. 1946*.

²¹ Nordelbisches Kirchenarchiv (NEKA), 98.07 Nachlass Volkmar Hertrich, folder 75, unpaginated, *Vertrauliche Aktennotiz Volkmar Hertrich 30 July 1945*.

leadership. In a letter of 6 July 1945 Mayor Rudolf Petersen (1878–1962) suggested that Tügel should resign and hand over his responsibilities to Volkmar Hertrich (1908–1958),²² who was the favoured candidate in state circles as he was not tainted by any involvement in the developments of 1933/34, when churchmen had used the political climate to suspend the ecclesiastical constitution and bring about major changes in the Lutheran Church in Hamburg. Hertrich had lost his teaching contract in Kiel in 1934 on account of his involvement in the Emergency League of Pastors; from 1934 until his appointment as chief pastor of St Katharinen in Hamburg in 1942 he had been pastor and lecturer of the *Kirchliche Hochschule* in Bethel. In early Summer 1945 Major Shelton approached Hertrich and offered military government support if he assumed the task of reordering the church and the introduction of questionnaires. According to Hertrich, his refusal to assume such responsibility prompted the order for Tügel's dismissal, prevented only by his, Hertrich's, appeal to consult Petersen before taking any action and by his own refusal to assume leadership were Tügel dismissed by the military government.²³ On 18 July 1945, Tügel received another letter from Petersen, calling for his resignation to prevent intervention by the military government. Threatened with the loss of his pension should he refuse, Tügel gave way.²⁴

In a statement addressed to clergy in Hamburg and in a letter to Petersen accompanying the announcement of his resignation, Tügel stressed that he was neither resigning voluntarily nor admitting the error of his ways.²⁵ Tügel saw his resignation as a martyrdom and even as a sacrifice, as one for all. "Das Opfer meiner Person", he argued to Schöffel, should suffice, „stellvertretend für alle anderen Pastoren, Beamten und Angestellten.“²⁶ When further personnel measures were considered, including the call for

²² StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Franz Tügel, Denkschrift über den Gang der Dinge in der hamburgischen Kirche seit der Besetzung Hamburgs am 3. Mai 1945 mit Anlagen, Anlage IV, Petersen to Tügel 6 July 1945.

²³ NEKA, 98.07 Nachlass Volkmar Hertrich, folder 75, unpaginated, Vertrauliche Aktennotiz Volkmar Hertrich 30 July 1945.

²⁴ The circumstances surrounding Tügel's resignation are also outlined by Hering, *Bischöfe*, p 85.

²⁵ StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Franz Tügel, Denkschrift über den Gang der Dinge in der hamburgischen Kirche seit der Besetzung Hamburgs am 3. Mai 1945 mit Anlagen, Anlage IX, Tügel to Petersen 18 July 1945 and Tügel to clergy, church committees, members of the *Kirchlicher Rechnungshof* and the *Landeskirchenamt* 18 July 1945.

the resignation of *Hauptpastor* Adolf Drechsler (1889–1970), Tügel threatened to rescind his resignation, arguing that its terms had been violated. His resignation, he argued, had been undertaken to save other pastors from filling in questionnaires, a condition he claimed the military government had accepted.²⁷

Tügel's voluminous correspondence before his death in September 1946 shows little sign of reassessment of the paths he had taken. Rather, spurred on by the injustice he perceived to have been done to him, his conviction that he had been on the right path increased. He found consolation, however, in having thwarted the hopes that Hertrich would assume leadership of the church. Initially, Tügel had hoped to hand over his sphere of competence and the entire competence of the synod and regional church council to Schöffel. In the event, the church leadership was placed in the hands of a colloquium of three of the chief pastors, the presidency being held by Schöffel as the pastor longest in office.²⁸ The colloquium was entrusted with all leadership functions until a synod could be constituted and elections for a new Bishop undertaken. The first synod met in December 1945; in February 1946 Simon Schöffel was re-appointed Bishop, by acclamation and with four counter-votes.²⁹ The military government seems to have seen Schöffel's election as a short term measure, accepted on condition that he resign when a new constitution was established.³⁰ The establishment of a new constitutional basis would in fact take over a decade and span three Bishops' reigns. In the event, Schöffel's re-election as Bishop, a position he held until 1954, decisively influenced the courses adopted by the Lutheran Church in Hamburg in the first decade after the end of the war.

²⁶ StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Tügel to Schöffel 28 August 1945.

²⁷ StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Franz Tügel, Denkschrift über den Gang der Dinge in der hamburgischen Kirche seit der Besetzung Hamburgs am 3. Mai 1945 mit Anlagen, Anlage XI, Tügel to Schöffel 19 July 1945.

²⁸ See PRO, FO 1014/464, no. 18. In 1947, Captain Broadbent, Religious Affairs Officer in Hamburg, questioned the wisdom of the military government's stance towards Tügel, which he believed was not quite correct, "but this was no doubt due to lack of experts and the pressure of work done at the beginning of the occupation."

²⁹ Hering, *Bischöfe*, p. 40.

³⁰ PRO, FO 1014/464, no. 18, Broadbent, confidential report on the *Landeskirche* in June 1947.

The reappointment of Schöffel, Tügel's desired successor, thus disappointing the hopes of the military government and senate, points to a continuity over supposed caesuras. Schöffel's re-election signalled not just a return to the leadership of the Weimar Republic but also to a continuity that includes the 'Third Reich'. Although Schöffel emerged from the 'Third Reich' with a feeling of self-satisfaction and even triumph,³¹ his stances in this period and indeed in the Weimar Republic were not uncompromised, in either church or state affairs. Rather, there was a cleft between his formal/official position and his informal/actual position. Lack of formal membership of both the German Christian movement and the NSDAP did not mean that Schöffel had not shared many elements of the ideology of both movements and identified himself with them. Schöffel was sceptical about democracy, rejected liberalism in both the church and state, was strongly nationalist and had defined strains of *völkisch* ideology in his thought. As a result of these views and his own ambition he had played a damaging role in church politics at both a local and national level; politically he helped undermine the Weimar Republic and then legitimise the 'Third Reich'.³²

The restructuring of the church leadership in Hamburg and the role of military government in the resignation of Tügel highlight the difficulties involved in British religious affairs policy. Elimination of Nazi elements from the church occupied a central position in the plans of the military government, but it was hoped that personnel change could be achieved without direct intervention and through ecclesiastical superiors. This was, of course, difficult when a senior cleric was involved. Ecclesiastical leaders were eventually exempted from investigation by the church denazification panels established on the order of the military government. Non-interven-

³¹ Strübel, *Continuity*, p. 70.

³² Heinrich Wilhelmi, *Die Hamburger Kirche in der nationalsozialistischen Zeit 1933–1945* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes, Ergänzungsreihe 5), Göttingen 1968, p. 284; Hering, *Bischöfe*, p. 35; Strübel, *Continuity*, pp. 70–73 and 127–128. – Historiography on the *Kirchenkampf* in the postwar period was long dominated by such simplifications and polarisations, whereby the Confessing Church was set neatly against the German Christian movement, ignoring not only the large group of 'neutrals' but also the blurred distinctions between the groupings and the fact that German Christian was not necessarily Nazi nor Confessing Church anti-Nazi, indeed that this was only in exceptional cases anti-Nazi. An early critique of such tendencies can be found in Friedrich Baumgärtel, *Wider die Kirchenkampf-Legenden*, Neuendettelsau 1958, ²1959.

tion also proved difficult in the case of the purge of less senior pastors when ecclesiastical leaders refused to comply with the military government's wishes. Such situations left the military government in a position in which the desired principles of policy – non-intervention and liberty – could not be upheld.

'Denazification' of the leadership in Hamburg, despite its limitations, was to be used as an alibi to prevent a more thorough purge of the clergy, a procedure paralleled in other regional churches. This policy was personified not least by the postwar Bishop Schöffel, who, following his own rehabilitation, seems to have considered the task of denazification completed and the way for reconciliation paved.

4 Pastoral membership of the NSDAP and the German Christian movement in the 'Third Reich'

Before turning to the principles behind ecclesiastical policy towards the denazification of the church, we might establish the extent of official compromise in the sense of pastoral membership of the German Christian movement and/or Nazi party. The blurred dividing lines, the apparent contradictions and the complex interplay of factors mean that statistical data on the levels of compromise can only offer a limited view. Correlating views evoked different official responses, often determined purely by personal considerations and characteristics. Membership of the Confessing Church by no means implied resistance to the regime, whilst elements of "opposition" could and did co-exist alongside Nazi party or German Christian membership.

Although the heyday of the German Christian movement in Hamburg was, in temporal terms, short, over half of the total of around 160 Hamburg pastors had been members at the high point of its success in the summer of 1933. Many more pastors, including Bishop Schöffel, implicitly supported the ideas of the movement without officially joining. Schöffel, indeed, actively encouraged and promoted membership of the German Christian movement among friends and colleagues.³³ Forty pastors left the movement *en masse* in late 1933, in support of Schöffel, but many explicitly proclaimed

³³ Wilhelmi, Kirche, p. 286.

their continued support of the ideas they believed the German Christian movement represented.³⁴ It was an issue of authority, of support for a Bishop who still continued to court *Reichsbischof* Ludwig Müller (1883–1945) in January 1934. The number of German Christian pastors declined steadily thereafter. From 1935, a small number of Hamburg pastors established contact with radical racial German Christian groups, initially remaining within the original German Christian movement and only under a separate organisational form from 1937 onwards, first under the name *Kampfgruppe Kommende Kirche* and then as the *Deutsche Christen. Nationalkirchliche Bewegung*. No more than ten Hamburg pastors were ever involved in these.³⁵ In 1945 at least six pastors were still active supporters. A number of other pastors were still members of the more moderate German Christian groupings.

There are no official records of pastoral membership of the Nazi party in Hamburg. Although it is difficult to establish this and records contradict each other, available sources suggest that between 10 and 15 % of Hamburg clergy in office in 1945 had been *Parteigenossen* at some stage. In 1945 at least nine pastors, and presumably several more, were still members of the party. More were members of a number of other party political organisations.³⁶ These figures suggest that the number of pastors who were party members was relatively small in contrast to other areas, although political support of the regime was not, of course, restricted to party members.

³⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 12, 8a, for letters from members of the German Christian movement resigning in loyalty to Schöffel and his authority.

³⁵ Records on these groupings are scant and scattered; copies of many documents are to be found in the personal records of pastors involved in these groupings. See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren.

³⁶ Estimated primarily on the basis of the denazification questionnaires of pastors held in Staatsarchiv Hamburg, see StA HH, 221-11 Staatskommissar für die Entnazifizierung und Kategorisierung. Further information from Wilhelmi, Kirche.

5 The development of denazification policy towards the churches in Hamburg and its results

Although British policy assumed equal treatment of all churches in its zone of control, in practice equality was achieved only at the level of official directives. As Gerhard Besier suggests and as developments in Hamburg confirm, the actual development of policy varied not just between but also within zones.³⁷

In Hamburg it is possible to define three main phases in the denazification policy towards the churches. Although these phases were linked to developments in the denazification policy towards the state, they did not run exactly parallel to them, nor to the phases which Besier defines with reference to policy towards the denazification of the churches in British controlled Hanover.

Although the denazification of the Lutheran Church in Hamburg did not officially begin until September 1945, it had effectively started in July 1945. One of the last actions of the outgoing Bishop Tügel was to approve the pensioning-off of “der verirrte Nazi-Pastor”³⁸ Carl Roth (1887–1962), officially at Roth’s own request and for ‘health reasons.’ It was hoped, however, that the feared imminent intervention of the military government could be pre-empted.³⁹

There had been consideration of issuing normal denazification questionnaires to Hamburg pastors in June 1945, when military officials had approached Hertrich to assume control of the leadership of the church in Hamburg and with it responsibility for its denazification, but in the event special clerical denazification questionnaires were only issued to the temporary church leadership in Hamburg in September 1945, and signalled the official start of the denazification process.

In this period, denazification of the clergy lay, at least officially, in the hands of the military government. According to military government in-

³⁷ See Besier, “Selbstreinigung”, p. 100.

³⁸ So the label of social democratic newspapers in September 1932. See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Carl Roth, no. 160.

³⁹ NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, Niederschrift über die Besprechung mit dem Pfarrkonvent in Cuxhaven-Ritzebützel am 13. August 1945.

structions, all clergy were to fill in these questionnaires and return them to the provincial church offices, which would then send them to the officer responsible for the churches in the military government. Each form was then to be assessed and, before an official decision was made, the advice of the temporary church leadership or a church delegate requested. In this way, every case was to be individually discussed, and the negotiations offered the church the possibility of influencing the decision of the military government. In retrospect, Schöffel spoke of this phase as “außerordentlich ruhig, würdig, reibungslos.”⁴⁰ At the time, however, the military government’s demand to fill in questionnaires had met with intense pastoral protest; some pastors had called for the church leadership to refuse to comply,⁴¹ and one ecclesiastical welfare institution had even compared the demand to fill in questionnaires on their political and ecclesiastical positions during the ‘Third Reich’ to the necessity of filling in forms confirming ‘Aryan’ descent under the Nazis.⁴²

In December 1945 the temporary church leadership advised three pastors, Rudolf Kohlenberger (1897–1963), Karl Boll (1898–1991)⁴³ and Robert Stuewer (1892–1957), to request voluntary retirement, to avoid submitting their questionnaires and hereby run the risk of automatic dismissal, loss of pension and possible internment.⁴⁴ These pastors had been adherents of the radical National Church movement; Boll and Stuewer had also been active party members. One other pastor, Friedrich Lensch (1898–1976), Director of the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten*, resigned from his position as Director but was assigned to a parochial congregation belonging to the Schleswig-Holstein church (Christuskirche – Othmarschen). In the ‘Third Reich’, over 500 of

⁴⁰ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B III f 12, 101, Schöffel to the 3rd sitting of the synod 3 July 1946, p. 11 of minutes.

⁴¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX a 93, no. 30, where Schöffel requested the advice of the Chancellery of the EKD in this regard in a letter of 12 October 1945.

⁴² NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX a 93, no. 8, letter from Amalie Sieveking House to the temporary church leadership 7 August 1945.

⁴³ See also Peter Boll (ed.), *Der unbekannte Faschismus. Nazis in der Hamburger Kirche. Eine Dokumentation mit Zitaten aus der Hamburger Kirchengeschichte über NS-Oberkirchenrat Dr. K.-F. Boll*, Hamburg 1992.

⁴⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B III f 12, 101, Schöffel to the 3rd sitting of the synod 3 July 1946, p. 11 of minutes.

the residents of the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten*, one of the largest institutions of the Home Mission devoted to the care of epileptics and the mentally handicapped, had fallen victim to the euthanasia policies of the state, "zielstrebig durchgeführt" by Lensch in the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten*, "Vorreiter in Hamburg und auf Reichsebene."⁴⁵ Lensch would later face trial for complicity to murder. The Hamburg church leadership submitted the remaining pastors' questionnaires in December 1945 with the recommendation that they should retain their offices.⁴⁶

Initially, the military government rejected six of the questionnaires submitted by the church leadership; further investigations were ordered in the course of the process, but in most cases, the church leadership proved able to reverse the decision of the military government. According to Schöffel, some pastors were unaware that there had even been negotiations surrounding the question of their continued exercise of office. However, in January 1946 the military government demanded the immediate dismissal of two pastors Jürgen Wehrmann (1908–1996) and Heinz Müller (1910–1994), a demand to which the church refused to accede, which led to a deadlock in relations.

The second phase of denazification policy towards the churches, the era of the *Kirchengeschworenenausschuß* ('church jury committee'), began in July 1946 and lasted until February 1947. In the state, new regulations for the removal of National Socialists from responsible positions – 'Decree 24' – and the regulations for its execution – 'Zone Policy Instruction Three' (ZPI3) – had been passed in January 1946. In April 1946, 'Appendix B' of the revised version of ZPI3 addressed the question of the 'Application of Control Council Directive No. 24 to Ordained Priests.'⁴⁷ According to the terms set out there, clergy were to be made subject to special political committees formed by the church, which were to assess and categorise clergy and submit their recommendations to the military government which would then make the

⁴⁵ Ingrid Genkel, Pastor Lensch – ein Beispiel politischer Theologie, in: Michael Wunder / Ingrid Genkel / Harald Jenner, Auf dieser schiefen Ebene gibt es kein Halten mehr. Die Alsterdorfer Anstalten im Nationalsozialismus, Hamburg 1987, pp. 59–83, quotes p. 61.

⁴⁶ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Simon Schöffel, Erklärung von Landesbischof a. D. Hauptpastor D. Dr. Schöffel zu den Fragebögen, December 1945.

⁴⁷ PRO, FO 1050, 1596, Appendix B to Zone Policy Instruction No. 3 (revised), Application of Control Council Directive No. 24 to Ordained Priests.

final decision. Hamburg was in fact one of the last areas in the British zone to implement these changes.

In line with the suggestions of the EKD and *Reichsbruderrat* sittings in Treysa in Spring 1946, the church leadership in Hamburg had been in the process of forming committees (*Selbstreinigungsausschüsse*) to assume official responsibility for self-purification in the hope of pre-empting further state intervention.⁴⁸ In the first few days of July 1946, however, the Military Government told the church leadership to form a 'church jury committee', and to submit a list of its members by 12 July 1946.⁴⁹ This committee was to consist of between five and eight people, the majority could be clergy but the committee should include at least two lay representatives. All committee members should possess a proven anti-Nazi background.⁵⁰ Non-clerical church officials were officially subject to *Fachausschuß 24* of the senatorial denazification committees that had been established; in practice, however, the church was also responsible for the denazification of its lay employees.

In the third phase of denazification, which began in early 1947, the military government handed responsibility over to German authorities. Given conflicts over Jürgen Wehrmann, a Nazi pastor whom the church was reluctant to dismiss, some left-wing groups called for the church to be subject to the same criteria as all other Germans, seeing in the present situation, which gave the church widespread responsibility for its denazification, a CDU coup.⁵¹ Commenting on the battle that took place for control of the denazification of the church, which was played out in the question of Wehrmann's denazification, Hertrich considered: "viel schlimmer als der Engländer sind doch die deutschen Stellen."⁵²

⁴⁸ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B III f 12, 101, Schöffel to the 3rd sitting of the synod 3 July 1946, p. 11 of minutes.

⁴⁹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45 (Entnazifizierung), no. 4, Niederschrift über die Sitzung mit Vertretern der Religionsgemeinschaften bei Major Colvin, 2 July 1946.

⁵⁰ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, no. 3, Politische Anweisung für die Ausschaltung ehemaliger Nationalsozialisten, 3 July 1946.

⁵¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45/4, no. 20, Hertrich to Urban, *Schriftführer* of the Evangelical Church in Bremen, 9 June 1947.

⁵² NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, no. 28, sitting of the self-purification committee with the parochial church committee of the Friedenskirche at Eilbek, 17 November 1947, p. 7 of minutes.

Officially, church demands for independence were not recognised, and the church became subject to the *Fachausschuß 24*, in line with the demands of left-wing forces. In practice, however, the church retained its privileged status and kept control over denazification, not just of clergy but also of lay church personnel, answering only to the military government. Denazification of the Church took place under the auspices of the 'self-purification committee' (*Selbstreinigungsausschuß*), which had been established to stand alongside the church jury committee authorised by the military government. The synod had instituted this 'self-purification committee' in February 1947; its membership was practically identical to that of the 'church jury committee' formed on the demand of the military government, whose members had been largely recruited from the members already foreseen for the church committees that had been in the process of being established when the military government had called for the establishment of church jury committees.

In February 1947 the church passed a 'Law concerning the self-purification of the church' (*Gesetz zur Selbstreinigung der Kirche*) to regulate the denazification of clergy, members of the synod, church committees and church employees. The self-purification committee was officially empowered with the examination of the above mentioned, „ob sie vom nationalsozialistischen Gedanken her die Verkündigung der Kirche verletzt oder die Ordnung der Kirche gestört oder in ihrer Lebenshaltung den Grundsätzen evangelischer Ethik zuwidergehandelt haben.“⁵³ The law for the purification of the church provided for the following sanctions: dismissal from office; permanent retirement; temporary retirement for a period of not more than two years; loss of the right to be chief pastor or to hold a high church office; temporary prohibition of pastoral activity for a set period of time; and permanent or temporary loss of the right to be member of the synod or a parochial church committee.⁵⁴ Despite the possibility of punitive measures, the committee stressed that it did not view its task as a disciplinary one, but as an internal and spiritual one, and legal intervention was seen as the last course of action.⁵⁵

⁵³ Gesetz zur Selbstreinigung der Kirche vom 13. Februar 1947, in: Gesetze, Verordnungen und Mitteilungen der Evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate (GVM), 1947, p. 8.

⁵⁴ See NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, 2 (Entnazifizierung), no. 24.

To aid the work of the self-purification procedure, the church introduced a visitation service.⁵⁶ Six visitation committees were formed, each with responsibility for a different district of churches. The committees consisted of four or five members, with both lay and clerical representatives, and were charged with visiting the churches assigned to them and conducting conversations not just with the pastors and church committee but also with all interested and active members of the congregation, focusing on the stance of the congregation and its members in the years from 1933 to the present point in time. To prepare for this, forms were issued requesting information on party and German Christian membership. Here, the time span investigated by the committees is significant in the sense that positions adopted in the last, decisive years of the Weimar Republic were not examined. Following these meetings, a report was to be completed, which formed the basis of the final decision. Under the terms of the law for the self-purification of the church – which had been passed only two years after the collapse of the ‘Third Reich’ – all trials were to be completed by December 1947. As the committees’ role was seen as a purely apolitical one, it was possible to appoint two former members of the Nazi party, Enno Budde (1901–1979) and Senator a. D. Hans-Henning von Presentin (1890–1952).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ KKrA HH, Niederschriften der Sitzungen der Landessynode, Hertrich to the 22nd sitting of the regional synod 24 November 1949, here pp. 12–13.

⁵⁶ See ‘Ordnung des Besuchsdienstes’, paragraph two, in: GVM, 1947, pp. 36–37.

⁵⁷ Budde, the son of a pastor, was close to radical right-wing groups in the Weimar Republic; he was a member of the Nazi party and author of *Blut und Boden* tracts in the ‘Third Reich’. He was later at the centre of a legal scandal, the so-called *Fall Nieland*, that reverberated through the Federal Republic when he presided over a court that refused to open a case against Friedrich Nieland, the author of rabid anti-Semitic tracts. In the postwar period Budde was active in the governing bodies of the church, including the committee of the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten*. He was a member of the right-wing *Deutsche Partei*. For more information, see Rainer Hering, *Der “Fall Nieland” und sein Richter. Zur Kontinuität in der Hamburger Justiz zwischen “Drittem Reich” und Bundesrepublik*, in: *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte (ZHG)* 81, 1995, pp. 207–222. It is suggestive of the often contradictory dividing lines that Budde had criticised the tardiness of the church in purging itself of Nazi pastors (NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 8, no. 3, letter from Enno Budde to Pastor Wilhelm Remé 13 June 1946) and had called for a harder line towards Adolf Drechsler (NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, votum dated 13 December 1947 and signed by Budde). Budde also wrote a six-page memorandum criticising Walter Horstkotte’s involvement in church governing bodies, arguing that he should be counted to “die Stützen des vergangenen Regimes” and condemning not least his role in the euthanasia campaign as committee member and then chair-

Although the British authorities had the right to reject the decision of the church jury committee / self-purification committee, they nevertheless proved unwilling to dismiss pastors themselves. In late summer and autumn 1947, however, the military government refused to recognise the decisions reached by the self-purification committee, arguing that they contravened the denazification laws, and it eventually threatened internment of the clergymen concerned should the church leadership not meet their demands.⁵⁸ At this time, the military government pointed out that the church's leadership refusal to dismiss Nazi pastors meant that at least two pastors had been able to remain in office in the decisive early period of re-education whose party political background meant that they would long have been interned, had they exercised any other profession.⁵⁹ Under this pressure from the British military government, which was itself under pressure from left-wing groups, the church leadership retired another four pas-

man of the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten* (NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, Enno Budde, *Die Stützen des vergangenen Regimes*, 5 August 1948). Budde's charges against Horstkotte, who was active in governing bodies in the church at the highest levels into the 1970s, were not unfounded, as Horstkotte's personal records suggest. Horstkotte's appointment as deputy chairman of the *Erbgesundheitsgericht* in the 'Third Reich' is suggestive of his reputation as politically and ideologically supportive of Nazi policies. See StA HH, 241-2 Justizverwaltung – Personalakten, B 3200 (Personalakte Walter Horstkotte). In the late 1950s / early 1960s Horstkotte's role in the 'Third Reich' had been brought to the attention of Bishop Karl Witte by Hans-Joachim Seeler. When the role of the justice started to be addressed at this time, Seeler had received Horstkotte's personal records to assess. He discovered, for example, that Horstkotte had presided over a court-sitting in which a Polish girl doing forced labour had been sentenced to death for stealing two apples (conversation with Hans-Joachim and Ingrid Seeler, 9 February 2000). – Hans-Henning von Pressentin had been leader of the *Stahlhelm* from the early 1920s until its dissolution; he then became a member and later honorary leader of the SA reserve. He joined the NSDAP in June 1933, was Senator from March to October 1933, and President of the Department for Work and Technology from October 1933 to September 1935. In denazification enquiries Senator a. D. von Pressentin claimed that he had kept his distance from National Socialism from 1933 and argued that he was pressurised into the senatorial appointment. In 1945 he was elected to the church council and to the main committee of the synod. In the early 1950s von Pressentin attempted to gain a pension based on the positions held from 1933 to 1936 as opposed to his former state positions. See StA HH, 131-15 Senatskanzlei – Personalakten, A 46 (Personalvorgänge Senator von Pressentin) and StA HH, 221-11 Staatskommissar für die Entnazifizierung und Kategorisierung, T 13838 (Entnazifizierungsakte von Pressentin).

⁵⁸ KKRA HH, Niederschriften über die Sitzungen des Landeskirchenrates, e. g. Schöffel to the 52nd sitting of the regional Church Council 7 August 1947.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

tors in August 1947, the afore-mentioned Jürgen Wehrmann, as well Pastors Johannes Vorrath (1898–1953), Georg Gerdts (1895–1960) and Ernst Smechula (1892–1961). In these cases, as before, pastors were not classified as ‘denazified’ but were granted early retirement ‘on health grounds’, as had those pastors denazified in December 1945.

When this conflict, which had centred first and foremost around Wehrmann, was settled, *de facto* recognition of the church’s independence in denazifying itself was given in November 1947, after Captain Broadbent pointed out the lack of mention of the church in the draft of a ‘Law on the Purge of Administrative and Economic Life from Nazi influence.’ Broadbent proposed a further clause stating that “the leaders of the churches shall be fully consulted before any change is made in the existing procedure for the denazification of clergy.”⁶⁰

The self-purification process was declared complete in March 1950 when the synod passed a *Gesetz zum Abschluß der Selbstreinigung der Kirche*.⁶¹ This opened the possibility for dismissed pastors to apply for a reconsideration of their case, paralleling the procedure in the state. In fact, some pastors had already been re-employed. In other *Landeskirchen*, denazified pastors had been reinstated before pastors in Hamburg had even been denazified.⁶²

6 Case studies

Given the reluctance and tardiness with which the pastors denazified in 1947 were retired, the efforts made on their behalf by the temporary church leadership and their later rehabilitation, their careers in the ‘Third Reich’ and the positions they adopted after its collapse deserve closer attention.⁶³

⁶⁰ PRO, FO 1014, 429, no. 9.

⁶¹ Printed in GVM, 1950, p. 13.

⁶² See e. g. Dietrich Crüsemann, *Die Bremische Evangelische Kirche nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg im Spiegel amerikanischer Akten (1945–9)*, in: Wiltrud Ulrike Drechsel / Andreas Röpcke (eds.), “Denazification”. Zur Entnazifizierung in Bremen, Bremen 1992, pp. 85–108.

⁶³ See particularly NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann.

The temporary church leadership had apparently considered advising Johannes Jürgen Wehrmann, whose case led to a breakdown in relations between the church and military government, to request retirement along with the other three pastors retired in December 1945. However, as Herntrich outlined to the church committee of Wehrmann's congregation, the regional church council "hat davon abgesehen und beschlossen, das Wagnis und Kampf um [ihn] aufzunehmen."⁶⁴ What positions had Wehrmann adopted in the 'Third Reich' and how did he assess these in the post-war period?

Wehrmann joined the Nazi party as a student in October 1930 and was politically active in it, both as a student in the last years of the Weimar Republic and then as an ordinand and pastor in the early years of the 'Third Reich'. He was appointed regional youth pastor in April 1937, succeeding Johannes Vorrath, who had lost the trust of youth and parents on account of the manner of incorporation of the Protestant youth groups into the Hitler Youth in late 1933 and early 1934. Alongside his membership and activity in the NSDAP – he was selected to attend a political leadership course in Berlin in 1934 – Wehrmann was also an active member of the German Christian movement; in 1936/37 he became involved in radical racial groups. Political support for the regime, and even denunciations of fellow pastors, co-existed with intervention on behalf of other parishioners and friends before the Gestapo, highlighting the blurred dividing lines and apparently contradictory stances of some pastors.

Wehrmann resigned as youth pastor in July 1945 but retained his parochial pastoral position. His questionnaire was submitted to the military government in December 1945, with the recommendation that he be retained in office. In January 1946, the military government had called for Wehrmann's immediate dismissal – a move rejected by the church leadership. He was eventually suspended in July 1946, as a temporary protective measure, the church leadership acting in full awareness that their response to this question was "überaus milde [...] verglichen mit dem Vorgehen des Staates in ähnlichen Fällen."⁶⁵ Wehrmann's suspension followed complaints

⁶⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45 (KGA), no. 28, sitting of the self-purification committee with the church committee of the Friedenskirche in Eilbek, 17 November 1947.

⁶⁵ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann, folder on disciplinary actions, no. 12, extract from minutes of the 19th sitting of the regional church council on 11 July 1946.

by a left-wing school teacher who saw in Wehrmann „den Typ eines Nazis, wie er selbst in den Zeiten der höchsten Macht dieser Partei nicht sehr häufig war.“⁶⁶ In a conversation with this teacher and in later conversations with church authorities, Wehrmann, who continued to salute Nazi comrades with the Hitler salute,⁶⁷ had denied the Holocaust, claimed to have spoken to Jews who had returned from Theresienstadt and experienced it as something of a holiday. He also later told the church authorities that he saw the fate of the Jewish and Polish people in religious and not political terms, “unter dem Gesichtspunkt des Vollzuges der Heilsgeschichte”;⁶⁸ National Socialism was to be condemned only as the collapse of the ‘Third Reich’ signalled a divine judgement against it; as he explained to the self-purification committee in December 1947, “ich hätte in einem Sieg des Nationalsozialismus die Segnung des Führers durch Gott gesehen.”⁶⁹ Following his suspension in July 1946, Wehrmann repeatedly infringed the terms of this suspension, leading to the introduction of disciplinary measures and his temporary pensioning off in August 1947 for a period of two years. He would, as we will see, receive a position before this time was up.

The temporary leadership had also submitted the questionnaire of Pastor Johannes Vorrath in December 1945, with an action sheet marked “unobjectionable.”⁷⁰ Vorrath was, however, as Schöffel wrote to Bishop August Marahrens (1875–1950) of Hanover in September 1946, “tatsächlich ein entscheidener PG und DC und als solcher in der ganzen Landeskirche bekannt.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann, folder on disciplinary actions, no. 6, Wilhelm Siegel to regional church council 14 May 1946.

⁶⁷ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann, folder on disciplinary actions, no. 12, extract from minutes of the 19th sitting of the regional church council on 11 July 1946, where Wehrmann’s continued use of the Hitler salute was noted.

⁶⁸ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann, no. 10, extract from minutes of sitting of regional church council on 20 June 1946.

⁶⁹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann, no. 146, Sitzung des Selbstreinigungsausschusses mit dem Kirchenvorstand Eilbeck-Friedenskirche und Herrn Pastor Jürgen Wehrmann am 5. Dezember 1947.

⁷⁰ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 171c, denazification questionnaire.

⁷¹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 122g, Schöffel to Bishop August Marahrens 3 September 1946.

Vorrath admitted on his denazification questionnaire to having been a party member from 1933 onwards and a cell leader from 1933 to 1936, as well as a German Christian from 1933 to 1936.⁷² After leaving the German Christian movement, he had adopted radical German Christian ideas. Vorrath had been responsible for the incorporation of the Protestant Youth into the Hitler Youth in January 1934 and was then appointed missionary regional youth pastor in March 1934. In December 1936 Vorrath's commission had been withdrawn given the lack of trust he enjoyed among parents; he was appointed pastor in Finkenwerder, in the face of protest on the part of congregational members who belonged to the Confessing Church. The strength of German Christian and Nazi influence in the committee made this possible. During this period – according to the later testimony of members of the Confessing Church – Vorrath held pagan services in the church. He argued that *Reichsbischof* Ludwig Müller had been a blessing for the church, whose decline was its loss; he said of the incorporation of the Protestant Youth that this had been the happiest day of his life; he threatened to denounce his critics to the party; he dismissed some congregational employees with the help of the Party; and he preached political support of Nazism – he is reported as saying “den Finkenwärdner möchte ich mal sehen, der mir hieraus [aus seinem Hakenkreuz; LS] einen Vorwurf machen will.”⁷³ As Schöffel admitted to Marahrens in the letter mentioned above, only Vorrath's enlisting had prevented a split in his congregation.⁷⁴

Vorrath was retired as of April 1947, a decision taken reluctantly and with the intention that he should be rehabilitated as soon as political circumstances allowed.⁷⁵ Vorrath himself had sought to help compromised

⁷² NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 171c, denazification questionnaire.

⁷³ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, Gemeindeakte Finkenwerder 1945–1976, 40–18, letter from members of Finkenwerder congregation to Schöffel 5 March 1946. On Vorrath, see also Rainer Hering, “Feststellen möchte ich aber, daß ich als Nationalsozialist unter keinen Umständen meine Tochter von einer jüdischen Lehrerin unterrichten lassen kann und werde.” Landesjugendpastor Johannes Vorrath und sein Kampf um “rassische Sauberkeit” in der deutschen Volksschule 1935, in: ZHG 85, 1999, pp. 143–164. Hering looks at Vorrath's appeal to National Socialist authorities to dismiss a Jewish teacher in whose class his daughter was in.

⁷⁴ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 122g, Schöffel to Bishop August Marahrens 3 September 1946.

⁷⁵ See footnote 107.

comrades whilst undergoing the rigours of his own denazification process, writing a *Persilschein* for a leading German Christian.⁷⁶ The tardiness of the church leadership's response in denazifying Vorrath had led to bitter inter-fractional relations in his congregation: former members of the Confessing Church in Vorrath's parish had made repeated appeals for his removal and had, rather ironically, attempted to be reintegrated into the Hanoverian *Landeskirche*, where they believed that Vorrath would have been long dismissed; faced with the church leadership's inaction congregational members even threatened to denounce Vorrath to the military government.⁷⁷ At the other extreme, a pastor temporarily employed in this congregation had even suggested that Vorrath should be appointed to another pastorate recently made free by the departure of the first Nazi pastor in July 1945, the argument being that the church committee, "rein parteimässig eingestellt", would be prepared to accept him.⁷⁸ Vorrath himself would, as we will see, be reemployed before his time of retirement was up.

Pastor Georg Gerdts claimed not to have been a member of the Nazi party on his denazification form; he had, in fact, joined on 1 May 1937. In February 1937, the Hamburg *Gauleiter* Karl Kaufmann (1900–1969) had appointed him *Vertrauensmann* for relations between the Nazi state and the church.⁷⁹ Gerdts had also been an active member of the SA, rising to the rank of *Oberscharführer* in 1935. He had spoken at meetings on such themes as "Deutschland, das Herz Europas", "Der Versailler Vertrag, seine Vorgeschichte und Auswirkungen", "Deutschland, Volk ohne Raum", "Deutsche Art und christlicher Glaube" and "Kirche im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus",⁸⁰ pointing to the extent of his ideological support for National Socialism.

⁷⁶ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 128, report on a conversation between Vorrath and the self-purification committee in March 1947.

⁷⁷ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 122, exchange of correspondence between the regional church council and Peter Meyer.

⁷⁸ NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 21, Landeskirchenamt – Büronotiz, 19 September 1945.

⁷⁹ Kurt Meier, *Der evangelische Kirchenkampf. Gesamtdarstellung in drei Bänden*, vol. 3, Göttingen 1984, p. 394.

⁸⁰ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts. The selection is taken from the appendix to Gerdts' denazification questionnaire.

Gerdts became a member of the German Christian movement in the summer of 1933 and was appointed *Gau- und Glaubensredner*, speaking on *völkisch* themes. He was a close associate of *Reichsbischof* Ludwig Müller. In 1936, Gerdts joined the small group of pastors that later assumed contacts to the Thuringian German Christian movement. He rejected the baptism of Jews into the Christian church, and had welcomed the laws passed in some regional churches forbidding this, expressing the hope that Hamburg would achieve similar 'clarity': "Gerade in Hamburg muß es sehr befremden, daß in den letzten Monaten eine Reihe von Juden in die Landeskirche eingetreten sind, nachdem landeskirchliche Pastoren die Taufe vollzogen hatten."⁸¹ Gerdts was involved in the Eisenach Institute for Research into and Elimination of Jewish Influence from Church Life (*Eisenacher Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung jüdischen Einflusses aus dem kirchlichen Leben*), although he claimed in the post-war period to have opposed the more radical elements of its programme. He did not, however, regret his activity in this Institute.⁸²

Gerdts was eventually pensioned off in April 1947; Schöffel enclosed a note with the letter confirming his retirement expressing the hope "dass es sich hier nicht um eine dauernde Entfernung aus dem Amt handelt, sondern dass sich mit der Zeit eine Beurteilung der Sachlage gibt, die es Ihnen ermöglicht, wieder in Ihr Amt zurückzukehren und das Evangelium zu verkündigen."⁸³

Pastor Ernst Smechula (1892–1961) was retired, officially on health grounds, with effect from 1 September 1947, to avoid disciplinary action being taken by the church following attempts to hide the extent of his political and confessional compromise on his denazification form, where he had claimed that he had supported the German Christian movement only at the beginning of the 'Third Reich' and had later been excluded from it. In fact, Smechula belonged to those pastors who had continued to support the German Christian longest and he had never been excluded from it. The self-purification committee, in its report on the matter, commented on the shat-

⁸¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 12/ 5, no. 163.

⁸² NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, no. 57, Gerdts to Schöffel 6 March 1947.

⁸³ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, no. 55, Schöffel to Gerdts 17 March 1947.

tering impression that he made, that it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that he had attempted a “Verschleierungsversuch, wenn nicht eine direkte Fälschung“ and that Smechula did not perceive the gravity of his actions.⁸⁴

With the retirement of these four pastors, eight pastors had been ‘denazified.’ Several other pastors whose positions in the ‘Third Reich’ had revealed a high level of support both for National Socialism and for German Christian ideology remained in office.

Many had assumed that Tügel’s close confidant, Adolf Drechsler, would resign along with Tügel. However, although he resigned as *Oberkirchenrat*, a position to which he had been appointed in 1934, he remained chief pastor at St. Jacobi – a post to which he had been appointed in 1940 in a process that had disregarded constitutional regulations and led to the protest of the colloquium of chief pastors. Drechsler had supported the development of church policy along the lines of the *Führerprinzip* within the church and acted as Deputy Bishop. A German Christian from 1933 to 1935, he had, following the exit of pastors from the German Christian movement in late 1933, threatened to denounce one of them to the Gestapo.⁸⁵ He precipitated the dismissal of another pastor in 1934, arguing that he was unable to work with someone who was not a German Christian, an action Drechsler denied in the post-war period.⁸⁶ In discussions with Drechsler, the visitation committee found that Drechsler lacked any perception of the gravity of his behaviour throughout the ‘Third Reich’, and attempted to play down his role.⁸⁷ However, despite protests from former members of the Confessing Church who called for his resignation, he remained chief pastor at St Jacobi until his retirement in 1960 but was excluded from the colloquium of chief pastors and from leadership functions traditionally executed by this forum.

Initially, the military government had demanded the dismissal of Pastor Friedrich Ottmer(1888–1961). Ottmer remained, however, in office, merely

⁸⁴ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Ernst Smechula, folder on disciplinary actions, no. 2, Bericht des Kirchengeschworenenausschusses über die Angelegenheit Pastor Dr. Smechula, 14 March 1947.

⁸⁵ *Wilhelmi, Kirche*, p. 111.

⁸⁶ NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, Protokoll über den Besuch des Besuchsdienstes am 12. Dezember 1947 in der Hauptkirche St. Jakobi.

⁸⁷ NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, votum 13 December 1947.

facing restrictions for a limited amount of time, although, as the *Kirchengeschworenenausschuß* recognised, he had not only adopted questionable stances in the 'Third Reich', but could not understand, some three years after the collapse of this regime, how dangerous these positions had been.

Ottmer was a member of the German Christian movement from 1933 until 1945 and had been a *Gauredner*. Although he had not been a member of the Nazi party, he had also openly supported the NSDAP in sermons, particularly in the first years of the 'Third Reich'. In the postwar period, not just Pastor Wilhelmi, his counterpart in the *Heiligengeistkirche*, but also the church committee of a neighbouring parish, where church services had been held since the destruction of the *Heiligengeistkirche* in the course of 'Operation Gomorrha' in 1943, considered Ottmer's sermons still to be "DC-mäßig gefärbt."⁸⁸ Three years after the end of the 'Third Reich' the self-purification committee concluded that Pastor Ottmer was still unable to come "zu einer klaren Erkenntnis bezüglich der erforderlichen bekenntnis-mässigen Entscheidung der Kirche gegenüber der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft" and they feared "dass Pastor Ottmer heute im Blick auf den durchschrittenen Weg die auf Grund der Heiligen Schrift und des Bekenntnisses zu erlangende Klarheit gewonnen hat." However, Ottmer was permitted to remain in his pastorate, "trotz mehrfacher Bedenken", although he was disqualified from being elected to the synod for a period of five years.⁸⁹ He retained chairmanship of the church committee, which he had taken over after German Christians in the church committee protested against Heinrich Wilhelmi's decision to support the prayer of petition of the *Bruderrat* in September 1938.⁹⁰ In the postwar period, Ottmer claimed not to have known that the reason for Wilhelmi's internment in 1938 had been his petitionary prayer for Martin Niemöller's release, a claim the self-purifica-

⁸⁸ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Heinrich Wilhelmi, no. 156, Bericht (Niederschrift) über die gemeinsam vom Kirchenvorstand zu Alt-Barmbek und den Abgeordneten des Landeskirchenrats [...] abgehaltene Sitzung [...] am 21. September 1948.

⁸⁹ NEKA, 98.11 Nachlass Theodor Knolle, folder 10, Der Selbstreinigungsausschuss der Landessynode in Sachen des Pastors Friedrich Ottmer, 13 December 1947.

⁹⁰ On the circumstances surrounding Ottmer's election as chairman of the church committee in Alt-Barmbek, see Wilhelmi, *Kirche*, pp. 268–269. Wilhelmi's attempts to be restored to this position in the post-war period failed.

tion committee considered absurd.⁹¹ Ottmer would, in fact, be re-elected to the synod even before this time had expired, whereby it would seem that the synodal delegate – the third pastor in the congregation, Erich Gless (1908–1978) – was pressurised by the church committee to resign his position in favour of Ottmer.⁹²

Pastor Heinz Müller (1910–1994), whose dismissal the military government had demanded on pain of internment, was also retained in office but initially deprived of the right to hold the senior pastoral position in a congregation or to be the chairman of the church committee. He had been a member of the Nazi party from 1932 to 1937 and continued to support much National Socialist policy after leaving the party. He had also been a member of the German Christian movement, dating his membership from 1934 to 1937.⁹³ In explaining his engagement in the Nazi party to the self-purification committee, he stressed his idealism, an idealism he used to suppress questioning the paths he had taken, initially refusing to condemn National Socialism as a political movement or to accept his own political decisions as signalling an “Irrweg”: “Daß ich es gut und echt gemeint habe, kann man mir nicht bestreiten. Meinen politischen Idealismus kann und werde ich nicht bereuen.”⁹⁴ He distanced himself from the positions he had taken only under pressure and to retain his position.⁹⁵

Pastor Hans Rottenberger (1904–1955), who had been appointed as prison parson in 1938, was also retained in office. He had been a member of the NSDAP from 1 May 1935 until the end of the ‘Third Reich’ and had held various party political positions. He had also been a member of the German

⁹¹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Heinrich Wilhelmi, no. 156, Bericht (Niederschrift) über die gemeinsam vom Kirchenvorstand zu Alt-Barmbek und den Abgeordneten des Landeskirchenrats [...] abgehaltene Sitzung [...] am 21. September 1948.

⁹² Records of the Heiligengeistkirche in Alt-Barmbek, folder: KV I 1931–1959, sitting of parochial church committee, 15 October 1951. The parochial church committee had originally delayed appointing a synodal delegate until Gless’s election as pastor, to avoid appointing Wilhelmi; see sittings of parochial church committee on 30 December 1948 and 18 January 1949.

⁹³ StA HH, 221-11 Staatskommissar für die Entnazifizierung und Kategorisierung, C/P 657 (Entnazifizierungsakte Heinz Müller).

⁹⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45/2, no. 23, Bericht des Besuchsdienstes über den Besuch in Moorfleth, 11 August 1947.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Christian movement until at least 1935. In his function as prison parson, to which position he was appointed in 1938, he supported National Socialist concepts from a political and criminal-political point of view.⁹⁶ In the post-war period, Rottenberger would play down his party membership by claiming that the regime's policies towards the church were unclear at that point, ignoring any questions relating to the persecution of social democrats, communists and Jews, and arguing that he had distanced himself from early idealistic hopes in the course of the 1930s.⁹⁷

The church leadership also secured the retention of Pastors Albert Niemann (1906–1988), a member of the Nazi party from 1931 until 1945, and Werner Sanmann (1912–1993), a member of the Nazi party from 1932 until 1945, whose questionnaires had been among the six originally rejected by the military government. Sanmann was, incidentally, Vorrath's successor in Finkenwerder.

As the process of denazification suggests, it was in the eyes of the church leadership less a punitive measure than a protective one, undertaken reluctantly and half-heartedly, even by churchmen who had been involved in the Confessing Church and had, in some cases, suffered under the preceding regime. It was a necessary evil, through which it was hoped to prevent any intervention by the military government and the damaging consequences such intervention would entail for church and clergy. The possibility of rehabilitation was given, in most cases, at the time of retirement and did not, in the event, even require a reassessment of the paths taken.

The limits of denazification, together with the initial lack of ordinands, affected the make-up of the pastoral profession long into the Federal Republic.⁹⁸ In 1950, 85 pastors had been ordained and worked as pastors in either the Hamburg church or another regional church before 1933; in 1960 the figure was 43. Of the 37 pastors still listed as being members of the Ger-

⁹⁶ See StA HH, 221-11 Staatskommissar für die Entnazifizierung und Kategorisierung, C(P) 795 (Entnazifizierungsakte Hans Rottenberger). On Rottenberger's engagement as pastor in Hamburg prisons, see Erik Eichholz, *Gefangenenseelsorge und nationalsozialistischer 'Strafarnst'*. Zur Politik der hamburgischen Landeskirche in der Gefangenfrage, in: *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 12, 1999, pp. 172–188.

⁹⁷ See correspondence in StA HH, 221-11 Staatskommissar für die Entnazifizierung und Kategorisierung, C(P) 795 (Entnazifizierungsakte Hans Rottenberger).

⁹⁸ On developments in pastoral representation in Hamburg, see Strübel, *Continuity*, esp. pp. 167 ff.

man Christian movement in Hamburg in April 1934 – that is, after the mass exit of pastors in late 1933 – ten were still in the service of the church in 1950, twelve in 1955 (due to the re-employment of two of the Thuringian German Christians), and seven were still pastors in 1960. Nine had been retired or were granted leave in the period 1945–1950, most often on account of their age. Eight were no longer alive in 1950. Six had been taken over by other churches, some were now retired. Of the seven members of the Thuringian German Christian movement in 1945, three were employed in 1950, five in 1955, three in 1960.⁹⁹

7 Rehabilitation and reintegration: ‘Renazification’ follows ‘denazification’

Ralph Giordano, whose family had been persecuted in the ‘Third Reich’ and who survived its last days in hiding in a Hamburg cellar,¹⁰⁰ charged the Federal Republic with having incurred a ‘second guilt’, which resided in “die Verdrängung und Verleugnung der ersten [Schuld]”, in “der große Frieden mit den Tätern.”¹⁰¹

Although several studies have established widespread personnel continuity and pointed to the retention and/or rehabilitation of Nazi and German Christian pastors, few have looked at the circumstances surrounding their re-employment or at their later career paths.¹⁰² Of those re-employed in the service of the Lutheran Church in Hamburg, almost all were, as their personal records reveal, later at the centre of a variety of scandals concerning their confessional activity.

⁹⁹ Figures established on the basis of Friedrich Hammer and Herwarth von Schade’s catalogue of clergy, in conjunction with the membership list of April 1934 available in: NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVI a 220 a 2, no. 52, Friedrich Hammer / Herwarth von Schade, *Die Hamburger Pastorinnen und Pastoren seit der Reformation*, Part 1, manuscript Hamburg 1995.

¹⁰⁰ See his semi-autobiographical novel: Ralph Giordano, *Die Bertinis*, Frankfurt a. M. 1986.

¹⁰¹ Ralph Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld oder von der Last, Deutscher zu sein*, Zürich – Hamburg 1987, p. 11.

¹⁰² A notable exception is Rainer Lächele, *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Glaube. Die “Deutschen Christen” in Württemberg 1925–1960*, Stuttgart 1994.

The eight pastors retired early – of some 160 who were assessed – all received their full pension. None were deprived of the rights of the clerical profession, a punishment reserved for liberal dissidents.¹⁰³ This meant that they were all allowed to undertake various pastoral duties, albeit with a dismissorial, and it also paved their way for their later rehabilitation.

The nature of the church and its message means that the opportunity for insight and a new beginning must be given. Schöffel justified his stances with reference to the repentance and forgiveness of the Apostle Peter: where a pastor compromised by his stances in the 'Third Reich' repented, "da muß man handeln wie Christus handelte und muß ihm die Möglichkeit geben, sich im Dienst des Herrn wieder zu bewähren. [...] Eine andere Haltung ist für eine Kirchenleitung, die den Namen Jesu Christi trägt, nicht möglich."¹⁰⁴ In contrast to the process in the state, where personal motivations were not excluded from the deliberations and motives of revenge played their role, the church leadership adopted a conciliatory stance; even Schöffel and Tügel were reconciled.¹⁰⁵ The committee argued that it hoped to give to the denazified the opportunity of insight, repentance and a new beginning, and argued that its policy had been developed against the backdrop of the "abschreckendes Beispiel" of the process and forms of denazification.¹⁰⁶

However, as we have seen, members of the temporary leadership in Hamburg were in fact to be found promising reinstatement not only to the compromised pastors but even, in some cases, to their congregations at the very time of their retirement: as soon as "circumstances allowed", "when everything had calmed down", when "protection" was no longer needed.

¹⁰³ On the treatment of dissidents in the church see Rainer Hering, *Vom Umgang mit theologischen Außenseitern im 20. Jahrhundert*, in: ZHG 77, 1991, pp. 101–122, reprinted in this volume; idem, *Orthodoxie versus Liberalismus in der Kirche: Der "Fall Strasowsky"*, in: ZHG 83, 1997, pp. 175–192; Wilhelm Heydorn, "Nur Mensch sein!" *Lebenserinnerungen (1873–1958)*, eds. Rainer Hering and Iris Groschek, Hamburg 1999.

¹⁰⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 11, 3, no. 95, Schöffel to Karl Wilhelm Bauer 23 March 1950.

¹⁰⁵ StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Franz Tügel, *Denkschrift über den Gang der Dinge in der Hamburgischen Kirche seit der Besetzung Hamburgs am 3. Mai 1945 mit Anlagen*, p. 7. Also NEKA, 98.32 Nachlass Simon Schöffel, E4, 1, Schöffel to Stählin 28 April 1947.

¹⁰⁶ KKRA HH, *Niederschriften der Sitzungen der Landessynode*, minutes of 22nd sitting of the synod on 24 November 1949, Bericht des Selbstreinigungsausschusses, p. 12.

Schöffel expressed the hope to Vorrath – as to Gerdts – “daß es sich hier nicht um eine dauernde Entfernung aus dem Amt handele, sondern dass sich mit der Zeit eine Beurteilung der Sachlage gibt, die es Ihnen ermöglicht, wieder in Ihr Amt zurückzukehren.”¹⁰⁷ Similar promises were made to members of Vorrath’s congregation: “Leider ist zurzeit an dem Entschlusse Pastor Vorraths nichts zu ändern; es spielen hier politische Verhältnisse mit”,¹⁰⁸ to another in 1948: “[...] ich glaube sagen zu dürfen, daß, wenn sich alles beruhigt hat und eine gewisse Zeit verstrichen ist, sich die Türen zum kirchlichen Dienst für Herrn Pastor Vorrath wieder öffnen werden.”¹⁰⁹ In adopting such standpoints, the church leadership was undermining not only the authority of the present state but also compromising its own authority and credibility. It also denied to compromised pastors the chance of reassessment and repentance by downplaying the need for this, encouraging rather self-justification and a martyrial perception of their fate, the very development they had hoped to avoid. This fostered the so-called “inability to mourn.”¹¹⁰ Guilt was forgiven before the pastors in question had even confessed this and repented of their actions.

In the event, reinstatement did not even require repentance and insight, as correspondence, minutes of meetings and later actions make all too clear. As none of the pastors was deprived of the rights of the clerical profession, they could continue to exercise clerical duties, as indeed most did, several with the express permission of the church leadership. Several denazified pastors called on the promise of reinstatement to support their later applications for re-employment. Of the eight pensioned in Hamburg, seven were in fact to return to the service of the church,¹¹¹ six eventually in full-time pastoral positions (one in Schleswig-Holstein);¹¹² one was employed on a

¹⁰⁷ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 125b, Schöffel to Johannes Vorrath 17 March 1947.

¹⁰⁸ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 127, letter from Schöffel dated 30 April 1947.

¹⁰⁹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 131a, letter from Schöffel dated 26 January 1948.

¹¹⁰ So the title of the psycho-analytic study of Alexander Mitscherlich / Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, Munich 1967.

¹¹¹ All except Karl Boll.

¹¹² Jürgen Wehrmann.

commissionary basis in Ohlsdorf.¹¹³ In at least one case, the period in which the pastor had been temporarily retired was recognised in the calculation of his later salary and pension.¹¹⁴ Of the six re-employed on a full-time basis, one was reassigned to his former congregation, despite the explicit recommendation of the self-purification that this possibility should be excluded.¹¹⁵ Several were re-employed even before the official ending of the period of retirement or the official end of the denazification process and the possibility provided for a reassessment of decisions.¹¹⁶ On average, the pastors denazified in Hamburg were retired for a period of three years and ten months before re-employment. The rehabilitation of these pastors is in stark contrast to the church's treatment of victims of the former regime, many of whom never received compensation for or recognition of their suffering under the 'Third Reich', not least those patients in ecclesiastical welfare institutions such as the *Alsterdorfer Anstalten* who had fallen victim to the racial-hygienic policies of the Nazi state.¹¹⁷

Pastor Carl Roth was granted employment on a temporary basis as an auxiliary preacher in the cemetery at Ohlsdorf in October 1951. His retirement was not rescinded. An appointment was considered desirable, however, given the disruptive influence of Roth in his former parish and the impossibility of stabilisation as long as Roth and his family remained there.¹¹⁸ Although Roth continued to be employed at Ohlsdorf until he reached retirement age in 1958, he was a controversial figure; several complaints were made about his confessional activities, not least about his burial practice which was not in line with church guidelines.¹¹⁹ Roth's obituary in 1962 contained factual inaccuracies; it was claimed that he remained pastor at

¹¹³ Carl Roth.

¹¹⁴ So with Johannes Vorrath. See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 153 (presidial agreement to Vorrath's request).

¹¹⁵ Ernst Smechula.

¹¹⁶ So e. g. Vorrath, Wehrmann and Gerdt.

¹¹⁷ Strübel, *Continuity*, pp. 84–87; Wunder/Genkel/Jenner, *Ebene*.

¹¹⁸ See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Carl Roth, no. 249.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, no. 256.

St. Gertrud in Cuxhaven-Döse until he was retired in August 1950, a possible cover-up of his compromised position.¹²⁰

In 1951, the self-purification committee reconsidered the case of Pastor Robert Stuewer.¹²¹ Stuewer, whose rejection of the Weimar Republic had found expression in his involvement in the right-wing opposition to the educational policy of the state, had joined the NSDAP and the German Christian movement in May 1933. In 1937, he had been one of the leading movers in the foundation of the *Nationalkirchliche Einigung* in Hamburg. His own formulation of the aims of this group in a flyer probably composed in 1937 was:

“Die nationalkirchliche Bewegung ‘Deutsche Christen’ setzt sich ein für die Überwindung und Beseitigung alles jüdischen und fremdvölkischen Geistes in den kirchlichen Lehr- und Lebensformen und bekennt sich zum Deutschen Christentum als der artgemäßen Religion des deutschen Volkes. Christus ist nicht Sproß und Vollender des Judentums, sondern sein Todfeind und Überwinder [...]. Die Einführung des deutschen Beamtengesetzes (Treueid auf den Führer, Arierparagraf) ist für die Nationalkirche selbstverständlich.”¹²²

Stuewer supported efforts to reform church music through the elimination of Jewish elements and attempts to aryanise the New Testament. He called for unconditional submission of the German Christian movement to *Führer* and *Reich*. Although Stuewer fell from favour under Tügel, his position in the Nazi party and the fear of the consequences his dismissal might have had meant that he remained in office. As we have seen, he had requested retirement in December 1945, on ‘health grounds’, following the advice of the temporary leadership, which sought to avoid handing in his denazification form.

In 1950, as a result of the deliberations of the committee charged with the revision of denazification cases, Stuewer was placed on the list of candi-

¹²⁰ Georg Daur, Nachruf Carl Roth, in: GVM, 1962, pp. 43–44.

¹²¹ The entire course of events is recorded in Stuewer’s personal records. See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer.

¹²² NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte II, no. 19, flyer of the Deutsche Christen (Nationalkirchliche Bewegung), Gaugemeinde Hamburg.

dates to be considered for employment – a decision Stuewer declared meaningless and illegal given that he had never been deprived of the rights of the clerical profession.¹²³ Hertrich assumed that no congregation would ever elect him.¹²⁴ Despite insight into the limitations of Stuewer's confessional standpoints, not least in his view of the Old Testament, he was assigned to oversee pastoral duties in a congregation from November 1951 until April 1952, when a new pastor could be elected. After Stuewer applied for this post, another pastor at St Stephanus informed the committee of the congregation of his concern at this candidature given the continuance of German Christian ideas in Stuewer's thought. He alleged that Pastor Stuewer had claimed that it was impossible for a Christian to use the 23rd Psalm in prayer given the verse "Thou set'st a table in my sight, in presence of my foes", which Stuewer was alleged to have said brought to mind "einen dicken fetten Juden." Stuewer also compared this to the stance of an English officer in the occupation period sitting at the window in a restaurant and mocking the starving Germans who went by.¹²⁵

In the light of his failure to be placed on the short list of pastors to be considered for election, Stuewer first called for the opening of a disciplinary action against himself to prove his innocence and then threatened to institute a civil case against the pastor who had charged him with propagating German Christian ideas. The questions evolved around whether Stuewer had used the actual words "dick" and "fett." The regional church council did not question that the charges made against Stuewer were in essence correct. In August 1952 the regional church council, with the countervote of Elisabeth Schulz and in the absence of Volkmar Hertrich, voted to re-employ Stuewer in a temporary capacity on condition that he drop his charges against the other pastor and the threatened public trial for slander, "denn

¹²³ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Sonderakte, no. 1a, Stuewer to President of the regional church council 15 July 1951.

¹²⁴ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte II, no. 17, extract from minutes of 196th sitting of the regional church council 4 September 1952.

¹²⁵ See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte II, no. 9, for the subsequent report of the pastor concerned. Similar charges were made by other members of the congregation. See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Sonderakte.

eine solche Verhandlung, und zwar in breiter Öffentlichkeit geführt, würde die Kirche und den Pastorenstand aufs schwerste schädigen."¹²⁶

This decision was taken despite the regional church council's admission that, should the case come to trial, they would be obliged to support the other pastor, as Stuewer's views were known to correspond to those reported by this pastor. Hertrich called for the reconsideration and revision of this decision. The decision was revised only in the light of new evidence of the extent of Stuewer's engagement on behalf of the Thuringian German Christian movement, particularly his anti-Jewish propaganda on behalf of the *Kommende Kirche*. To prevent a public trial and the consequences of this for the church, Stuewer remained employed by the regional church council on a temporary basis, but without exercise of office, and received, as of September 1952, his full salary, when he agreed to drop the aforementioned charges. In July 1954, unhappy with the extent of his rehabilitation, Stuewer demanded that he be reappointed to his former position as pastor in St Jacobi,¹²⁷ involving the *Bürgerverein der Innenstadt* in his fight. Faced with the refusal of the church authorities, Stuewer, who styled himself in correspondence as "Pastor zu St. Jacobi im aufgeh[obenen] Ruhestand", appealed first to the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) and then to the Federal court, without success.¹²⁸ In 1955, Stuewer was at the centre of a further controversy following his sermon on the occasion of the burial of the former Nazi senator Johann Wilhelm von Allwörden (1892–1955), which was said to bear witness to the continuation of pagan elements of German Christian ideology in his thought.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte II, no. 16, extract from minutes of 195th sitting of regional church council 28 August 1952.

¹²⁷ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte I, no. 1, Antrag an den Kirchenvorstand der Hauptkirche St. Jacobi zu Hamburg und an den Landeskirchenrat der Ev. Luth. Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate auf Abschluss der mich betreffenden Entnazifizierungsmassnahmen durch Wiedereinsetzung in mein früher innegehabtes Gemeindepfarramt an der Hauptkirche St. Jacobi zum 1. Oktober 1954, 27 July 1954.

¹²⁸ See e. g. NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte I, no. 18, letter from Stuewer to the president of the Landeskirchenrat, Walther Brandis, 19 January 1955.

¹²⁹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Robert Stuewer, Nebenakte I, no. 21.

Pastor Rudolf Kohlenberger received a first temporary appointment in March 1953, in April 1954 he was assigned responsibility for spiritual care in the camps and bunkers (*Lager- und Bunkerseelsorge*). Pastor Albrecht von Hennigs (1911–1989), who was entrusted with spiritual care in the camps, protested at his appointment, arguing that Kohlenberger was “dem kirchlichen Leben fast völlig entrückt” and “völlig verbittert.” Von Hennigs continued that he could not reconcile his own conscience with support of Kohlenberger’s employment in the given sphere, “denn gerade diesen armen Menschen, denen oft jeder Halt genommen sei, könne nur ein Mensch helfen, der im Zentrum des Glaubens stehe und das mit aller Zuversicht.”¹³⁰ In January 1957 Kohlenberger was re-appointed to a full parochial pastoral position (Nathanaelkirche – Horn).

Pastor Ernst Smechula was re-appointed to his former congregation at St Annen in March 1950, violating the explicit recommendation of the self-purification committee that he not be reappointed here. There, the committee had supported his return; a number of younger pastors had rejected a pastoral appointment there, not least on account of the conditions resulting from the destruction of the church, congregational rooms and pastorate in bombing.¹³¹ Previously, efforts had been made to secure Smechula’s employment in Hanover, which would have avoided the necessity of reopening not just his denazification process but also disciplinary measures against him.¹³²

Schöffel had also tried to secure the employment of Pastor Gerdts in Hanover, suggesting to the responsible authorities that Gerdt’s denazification would be better undertaken there, where he believed the chances of success to be better.¹³³ In March 1949, Gerdts officially requested the lifting of his pensioning, basing his request on the injustice done to him: “Ich tue

¹³⁰ KKrA HH, Niederschriften über die Sitzungen des Landeskirchenrates, Schöffel in the 213rd sitting of the regional church council 12 March 1953, p. 3 of minutes.

¹³¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 11, 3, no. 95, Schöffel to Karl Wilhelm Bauer, 23 March 1950.

¹³² NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Ernst Smechula, disciplinary records, no. 87c, extract from minutes of regional church council 23 June 1949. Gerhard Besier suggests that the terms of denazification in Hanover were more lax (Besier, “Selbstreinigung”).

¹³³ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, no. 67, Schöffel to the committee of a Hanoverian congregation 6 March 1948.

diesen Schritt in dem Bewusstsein, weder das Bekenntnis verletzt, noch gegen die Ordnungen der Kirche verstossen zu haben, obgleich ich als Idealist verschiedenen Organisationen der NSDAP angehörte."¹³⁴

In assessing Gerdt's appeal for reinstatement, the authorities were spurred on by the deterioration of relations between Gerdts and his former congregation and the impossible situation with which the new pastor was confronted, and Gerdts was re-employed on a temporary basis as pastor for sailors in May 1949. In 1953, the church leadership seems to have intended to re-appoint Gerdts to his former pastorate, an intent thwarted by Gerdts' own actions in his new position as sailors' pastor, where he let himself be named secretary of the mission to sailors in Harburg and appointed a close relative as missionary there, without consulting the leadership. These actions had provoked a crisis of relations in Harburg and led to Georg Gerdts' immediate removal from his position in the Sailors' Mission in Hamburg.¹³⁵ After a short missionary appointment Gerdts was appointed to a full-time parochial position (Hamburg-Neuengamme) in September 1955. In his extended curriculum vitae sent to Bishop Theodor Knolle prior to this appointment, there was no sign of critical consideration of his positions. Rather, ten years after the collapse of the 'Third Reich', Gerdts remained convinced that the positions he had adopted had been for the best of his congregation and had preserved peace there; he perceived the period of his retirement as one which had been forced on him by the pressure exerted on the church but undertaken in the knowledge of the possibility of re-employment in the near future.¹³⁶

Pastor Johannes Vorrath had been reluctantly pensioned off in March 1947 but was granted the express right to hold services until Easter 1947. At this time, the self-purification committee concluded that Vorrath was "auch heute zu einer klaren Beurteilung der gegenwärtigen Situation weder kirchlich noch politisch in der Lage."¹³⁷ At the end of 1948, Vorrath was assigned to a congregation (Groß Borstel), from November 1949 he received

¹³⁴ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, no. 69, Gerdts to Schöffel 25 March 1949.

¹³⁵ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, nos. 90, 91 and 96.

¹³⁶ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Georg Gerdts, no. 116, Gerdts to Bishop Theodor Knolle, Persönliche Angaben über meinen Werdegang, 8 June 1955.

his full salary, was later even promoted into the highest salary class and was unanimously elected by the committee of the congregation to the newly created third pastoral post in 1951.¹³⁸

Pastor Wehrmann had been temporarily retired in August 1947 with the recommendation that he attend a pastoral college; in January 1948 the church regional council opened a disciplinary action against Wehrmann on account of his infringement of his suspension. In the course of its deliberations, the disciplinary committee recognised the inefficiency of the church leadership and the shortcomings of some of the decisions regarding Wehrmann – not least the permission for limited exercise of office and the length of his denazification process with the attendant pressures this entailed.¹³⁹ Wehrmann received his first commission in February 1949, before the two years of his temporary suspension had elapsed, and was reappointed to a parochial pastoral position (Friedenskirche – Jenfeld) in spring 1951. He remained in the service of the church until his retirement in 1977.

The one pastor who was not re-employed – *Oberkirchenrat i. R.* Karl Boll – received a pension based on his salary as *Oberkirchenrat*, a position he had held from 1934 to 1936 before Tügel had dismissed him because of his Nazi agitation and his denunciation of colleagues, including the later Bishop Karl Witte (1893–1966), to the Gestapo. At the time of his retirement, this meant that his salary exceeded the average pastoral salary.¹⁴⁰ At the time of Boll's retirement, the church leadership had in fact mentioned the possibility of re-employment, both to Boll himself and to associates of his¹⁴¹ – as Boll later recalled in connection with his application for rehabilitation in 1951.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Johannes Vorrath, no. 128.

¹³⁸ See footnote 114. Also Hering, Vorrath, p. 162.

¹³⁹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Jürgen Wehrmann.

¹⁴⁰ StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Korrespondenz, Schöffel to Tügel 26 March 1946. Written in response to Tügel's protests at the course of denazification, in his letter Schöffel pointed out his deliberate 'generosity' with regard to Boll's retirement, which meant that Boll received a pension based on his final salary, which corresponded to that of a *Hauptpastor*, and meant that his pension was hence at least as high as a normal pastoral salary.

¹⁴¹ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Karl-Friedrich Boll, no. 166, Schöffel to Boll 22 November 1945 and Schöffel to Brauer 20 November 1945.

8 Explanations: between prophecy, politics and pragmatism

In explaining the positions they adopted, which prevented a consistent and thorough purge of the church and led to the reintegration of the vast majority of pastors compromised on account of their political and/or confessional stances in the 'Third Reich', churchmen themselves appealed to prophetic considerations, arguing that ecclesiastical policies sought to avoid the pitfalls of the denazification policy in the state, encouraging insight into the limitations of past positions and a reassessment. Did this appeal to prophetic intervention that the churchmen proclaimed mask the primacy of politics and pragmatism in their actions? How are we to explain the reintegration not just of Nazi pastors but also of those pastors who had supported radical strains of the German Christian movement?

Many of the reasons for the limitations to the process of self-purification have already been suggested – and they certainly did not exclude opportunism and political pragmatism – but recourse to such explanations does not, however, account for the unanimity with which the courses adopted in the denazification process were supported, the support of men who had been prominent in the church opposition in the 'Third Reich' and had suffered in this period, or who otherwise devoted much time and effort to charitable enterprises, of respected theologians and popular pastors. For the most part they were churchmen who were doing what they believed to be the best for people, nation and church and not just acting out of self-interest, to cover up their own behaviour in the preceding period and certainly not to secure Nazi and German Christian influence in the church. In this sense, one must begin by looking at the worldview of these churchmen, at their priorities and agendas. Whatever we may think of it, the prophetic, the political and the pragmatic are inextricably combined to form a largely coherent worldview. As in 1933, most churchmen reacted according to political and theological traditions and their understanding of the issues involved, pointing, not least, to the initial reassertion of a conservative mentality, in which the church's distaste for democracy and pluralism were decisive. This co-existed with opportunistic politics and pragmatic considerations.

¹⁴² NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Karl-Friedrich Boll, no. 55, Boll to Schöffel 27 June 1951.

9 The reintegration of Nazi pastors

The reintegration of Nazi pastors was in fact implicit in the terms on which the church undertook the denazification of its ranks. Most churchmen preferred to speak not of denazification of the church but of self-purification, *Selbstreinigung*, a term which indicates the criteria and considerations at play. On the one hand, there was widespread unanimity, spanning churchmen of different theological and church political outlooks, who had adopted different positions in the preceding period, that a purge of the clergy could only take place if carried out by the church itself, independent of state and external pressures. They justified this position with reference to the church conflict and portrayed it as a learning process born of their experiences in the 'Third Reich'. On the other hand, it was argued that any purge could only take place on the basis of ecclesiastical and not political criteria. Unless political factors were seen to have penetrated into the teaching and preaching of the pastor concerned, for example through membership of radical strains of the German Christian movement, political compromise was not seen as a sufficient reason for disciplinary action, "denn es kann einer gegen dies Gesetz verstossen haben und doch ein sehr guter Pastor sein" (Schöffel).¹⁴³

In effect, such demands trivialised National Socialism as a political ideology and meant that the church was demanding that it should be subject to different laws to the rest of the population. On this interpretation, clergymen who had supported the Nazi party as German civilians and not in the interest of the exercise of office should be exempted from the process other civilians faced on account of comparable decisions. This standpoint also ignored the extent to which politics was already in the church and suggested the extent to which churchmen deluded themselves with regard to their motivation in propagating this course. However, the insistence on church independence was not inconsistent with theological traditions, particularly the Lutheran teaching of the two kingdoms, and it accorded with the terms on which the church conflict, as most people understood it, had been fought, for 'church to remain church', terms in which few churchmen had perceived a contradiction. A critical questioning of these traditions came only

¹⁴³ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45 (Gutachten), no. 13, report composed by Schöffel 11 July 1946.

later, with the achievement of conditions more conducive to reassessment, with new theological developments and, not least, with the change in generation which set in in the late 1950s and was complete by the mid 1960s.¹⁴⁴

Although the dividing lines in the 'Third Reich' had been unclear and involvement in the Confessing Church had by no means excluded political support of the Nazi regime and despite the continued portrayal of the church conflict as a battle for the 'church to remain church', involvement in the Confessing Church was, however, often used to imply resistance to the regime, relieving the church of the need to purge itself of compromised elements. Even those churchmen who had no ulterior motives portrayed the church struggle in these terms. Volkmar Hertrich reported to the religious affairs section on the measures undertaken to denazify the church, stressing the need to distinguish between political and ecclesiastical considerations: "it had, of course, particularly to consider that during the whole time of the 'Third Reich' the brave stand up for the church confession meant, in the most far-reaching sense, direct resistance against the national socialistic movement."¹⁴⁵

A decisive factor promoting the reintegration of politically compromised pastors was the emphasis placed by leading Hamburg churchmen on subjective assessment of the political decisions of Nazi pastors. Church leaders argued that the question as to whether pastoral engagement on behalf of National Socialism had led to pastors infringing their ordination vows, which was the sole criterion for a purge, could only be assessed subjectively, on the basis of conviction and not action. It was a question of "wahre innere Stellung" and "nicht nur Zahlen", of "Gesinnung" and not of actions.¹⁴⁶ In its deliberations, the self-purification committee was interested less in the actual actions undertaken by pastors in the past than in the motivation given for their support of Nazi ideology and policy and in their present assessment of National Socialism.

¹⁴⁴ See Strübel, *Continuity*, pp. 167–173 for developments in the generational composition of clergy.

¹⁴⁵ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, no. 27, Hertrich to the religious affairs section of the military government 19 March 1947.

¹⁴⁶ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B III f 12, 101, Schöffel to the 3rd sitting of the synod 3 July 1946.

For the most part, church leaders and the self-purification committee accepted the explanations offered by Nazi pastors called before the self-purification committee, who tended to stress idealistic motives, portraying their engagement on behalf of National Socialism as the result of their conviction that National Socialism was “eine echte nationale Bewegung”,¹⁴⁷ often pointing to point 24 of the National Socialist party programme, the appeal to positive Christianity, to argue that the party was initially open to the claims of Christianity. These reasons were taken over in the references written by the church leadership and the self-purification committee for these pastors, where typical explanations were that the pastor’s decision to become active in the NSDAP had been made “in echtem Idealismus [...] auf diesem Wege der gemeindlichen Arbeit und der Sammlung der ihm anvertrauten Gemeindeglieder dienen zu können”,¹⁴⁸ or “erst nach langer Überlegung 1935 eingetreten, getäuscht durch die Behauptungen der Partei, dass sie auf dem Boden des positiven Christentums stünde”;¹⁴⁹ alternatively, it was argued in references that the pastor concerned had joined the party that he might better fulfil “den missionarischen Auftrag an der Arbeitergemeinde”, “[i]n seiner Haltung bestimmt durch die völlige soziale Zersetzung”.¹⁵⁰ Even in their discussions with these pastors, the self-purification committee proved reluctant to condemn this idealism, assuring Pastor Heinz Müller, whose dismissal had been demanded by the military government, “daß es sich nicht um eine Verwerfung seiner idealistischen Haltung handeln könne, wohl aber um eine grundsätzliche Beurteilung des Nationalsozialismus vom heutigen Standpunkt aus”.¹⁵¹

By stressing the idealism behind pastors’ engagement in and on behalf of the NSDAP, it was possible to argue – as did Schöffel – that Nazi pastors had committed an error which was at most political. This meant that Schöffel warned against schematic assessments, arguing that it was necessary to intervene on behalf of “diese zum Teil tüchtigen Geistlichen, die einst nur

¹⁴⁷ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45/2, no. 23, Bericht des Besuchsdienstes über den Besuch in Moorfleth, 11 August 1947, here quoting Müller to the visitation committee.

¹⁴⁸ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45/2, no. 3.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45/2 (Kirchengeschworenenausschuss), no. 23, Bericht des Besuchsdienstes über den Besuch in Moorfleth, 11 August 1947.

aus falschem Idealismus, meistens aus dem Wunsch heraus, den Bolschewismus zu bekämpfen, im 'roten' Hamburg in die Partei eingetreten waren."¹⁵² Support of National Socialism was seen as all the more understandable "da ja gerade in Hamburg" – so Schöffel – "die Kirchenfreundlichkeit des Nationalsozialistischen Staates und seine Verbundenheit mit der Kirche besonders nachdrücklich betont wurde."¹⁵³ Such argumentation points back to the widespread support for National Socialism among pastors, resulting from their alienation from the democratic forms of the Weimar Republic, the trauma of the revolution and the perceived threat of Bolshevism.¹⁵⁴ Many church leaders in responsible positions were themselves compromised on account of their own positions in the preceding period, not least in the final, fateful years of the Weimar Republic and the early years of the 'Third Reich'. The unclear dividing lines of the 'Third Reich', the way in which enthusiasm, adaptation and partial resistance had often coexisted, meant that few churchmen were in a position to judge or to take the high moral ground.¹⁵⁵ Such pragmatic considerations aside, many churchmen truly empathised with Nazi churchmen facing denazification, as they had themselves invested similar hopes and expectations in National Socialism, and in this sense the call to look at conviction as opposed to action came from the heart.

The employment of such argumentation also suggested the extent to which churchmen continued to play down National Socialism as a political phenomenon in the period after 1945, seeing Nazi political convictions as a pardonable and understandable political error, and it moreover suggested the extent to which traditions were reasserted in the period after 1945, when for most churchmen the main concern continued to be less the political right than the political left. With the encroachment of the Cold War, churchmen intensified their fight against Bolshevism, which led to a further degradation of the need for a purge of Nazi pastors and also led more

¹⁵² NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 11/1, no. 76a, Simon Schöffel, Die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland, 13 November 1945.

¹⁵³ NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Simon Schöffel, Erklärung von Landesbischof a. D. Hauptpastor Simon Schöffel zu den Fragebögen, p. 5 of statement.

¹⁵⁴ Vollnhals, Last, p. 276.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

generally to intervention in the denazification process in support of the bourgeois middle classes, and militated against support of many of the victims of the preceding regime.

The very interpretation of National Socialism predominant in church circles also meant that denazification as a political measure did not occupy a central position in considerations about the nature of the necessary new beginning, not amongst the population at large and certainly not amongst pastors. Whereas in 1933 church declarations had welcomed the advent of the new state as a religious dawn, in 1945 National Socialism was interpreted as the apogee of a long development of secularisation and the fall from faith, “*der große Abfall*”,¹⁵⁶ which had set in with the Enlightenment. Schöffel saw National Socialism as a demonic force, in a literal sense, against which the responsibility of the individual was blurred. The alienation apparent in National Socialism was, Schöffel outlined to the first synod of the post-war period, not a new phenomenon, “*sondern ist längst vorher schon auf der Bahn gewesen und hat im Nationalsozialismus nur ihren in Deutschland höchsten Gipfel erreicht. Der Kampf gegen das Christentum, das Bestreben, es zu ersetzen und anderes an seine Stelle zu bringen, ist alt.*” Even theology and the church, he lamented, had fallen prey to liberalism: “*Und das eben, diese jahrhundertlange Überfremdung, gipfelnd im Nationalsozialismus, das ist es, was wir rückhaltlos und rücksichtslos ausmerzen müssen, was umzupflügen ist, wenn wir ein Neues säen wollen.*”¹⁵⁷ Following such interpretations, Schöffel saw the main task of church and state as the re-establishment of a Christian order, in the rechristianisation – or more appropriately relutheranisation! – of society. By fleeing into pictures of demonology or interpreting National Socialism within the light of theories of an “*Abfall von Gott*”, an analytical and honest assessment of the causes of National Socialism and a confrontation of these could be evaded.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the secularisation thesis reinforced churchmen in their conser-

¹⁵⁶ So the title of the 300 page book by Walter Künneth, the most well-known Lutheran proponent of this interpretation. Walter Künneth, *Der große Abfall. Eine geschichtstheologische Untersuchung der Begegnung zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Christentum*, Hamburg 1948.

¹⁵⁷ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 17 (Protokolle der Einstweiligen Kirchenleitung Sitzungen 1–18, Juli–Dezember 1945), appendix to 22, Ansprache des Landesbischofs a. D. D. Dr. Schöffel, Vorsitzender der einstweiligen Kirchenleitung gehalten am 19. Dezember 1945, pp. 10–11.

¹⁵⁸ Vollnhals, *Traditionswahrung und Neuorientierung*, p. 143.

vatism, as it automatically excluded a number of social political concepts. Given that the National Socialist period was interpreted as an extreme expression of secularised society, agendas centred around the rechristianisation of the German people and the fight against forces which would hinder it. It was feared that the dismissal of church forces compromised through National Socialism would increase the risk posed by other circles and militate against the rechristianisation of the German *Volk*.

Guilt was seen only in a limited framework. Most churchmen in Hamburg – as elsewhere – argued that guilt should only be viewed before God, as a private affair. In conjunction with the interpretation of the former regime, this understanding of guilt meant that denazification was accorded only secondary importance. Rather, leading churchmen stressed the importance of looking ahead, of starting afresh: “wir [haben] keine Neigung, uns in die Vergangenheit zu verkrallen und nach Schuld und Schuldigern zu fragen, am allerwenigsten im politischen Sinne, sondern wir wollen, eingedenk unserer Berufung, unser Ziel ins Auge fassen, und das ist das Reich Gottes.”¹⁵⁹ This encouraged a silent denial of responsibility. In contrast to the Nazi emphasis on collective ‘health’ in the ‘Third Reich’, to which churchmen had largely succumbed, there was now a new emphasis on the individual, and churchmen argued that guilt should be addressed privately. This not only aided the reintegration of politically compromised pastors, but also meant that the church could avoid questions of restitution and rehabilitation for the victims of the preceding regime, as the answer that Christ supports those in need could be seen as restitution enough for the victims.¹⁶⁰

The reintegration of politically compromised pastors was, then, implicit in the terms on which churchmen set about the denazification of their own ranks and it was possible not least because of the background and reassertion of National Protestant traditions. These traditions had determined the identification of throne and altar, had led to uncritical nationalism and militarism, nourished inner rejection of the Weimar Republic and influenced

¹⁵⁹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B IX b 17 (Protokolle der Einstweiligen Kirchenleitung Sitzungen 1–18, Juli–Dezember 1945), appendix to 22, Ansprache des Landesbischofs a. D. D. Dr. Schöffel, Vorsitzender der einstweiligen Kirchenleitung gehalten am 19. Dezember 1945, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ See also Strübel, *Continuity*, pp. 84–85, for further discussion of this point.

the reaction to National Socialism and the failure, in most cases, to develop an adequate response. Within this, apparently different groupings, not least the Confessing Church and the German Christian movement, had shared a number of common assumptions about politics – and, as the integration of German Christian pastors will suggest, also about the Jews. In conjunction with their insistence on the independence of the church and the primacy of ecclesiastical considerations in any purge, which in many cases ignored the political reality and was suggestive of a healthy dose of self-delusion, these factors conditioned ecclesiastical responses to a political purge of their own ranks and meant that churchmen saw the need for a purge of Nazi pastors only in so far as political considerations had injured the creed of the church and led to pastors infringing their ordination views.

10 The reintegration of German Christian pastors

Given that the necessity of a purge of churchmen whose views and actions had injured the creed of the church was in principle accepted, the reintegration of German Christian pastors initially seems more surprising.

Although church leaders were prepared to accept the need to dismiss pastors who had supported German Christian ideas, they had made, as suggested, a fundamental distinction between the German Christian and the National Church movement. Involvement in the former was seen as arising out of pure idealism, the pastors were “gutgläubig der Meinung, dass auf dem Wege der ‘Deutschen Christen’ eine innere Neuerung und organisatorische Stärkung der Kirche erreicht werden könnte”.¹⁶¹ Hence, no pastor faced censure on account of early involvement in the German Christian movement; even those pastors who were still members in 1945 were not dismissed from their positions but faced, at worst, disciplinary measures such as the loss of right to be the chairman of a church committee or to sit in the synod.

Leading churchmen had, however, expressed their support for a purge of those pastors whose support of radical racialist German Christian groups had led to views that infringed the creed of the church. Those pas-

¹⁶¹ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, no. 28, statement accompanying questionnaires of temporary leadership to Broadbent 25 October 1945.

tors pensioned in late 1945, before the church leadership had submitted pastoral denazification questionnaires, had been involved in such groups. Other pastors, however, had initially remained in office despite their membership of radical German Christian groups. Moreover, pastors who had been denazified on account of radical German Christian views found with one exception reemployment in the church in the course of the late 1940s and early 1950s, as we have seen. This process of rehabilitation was relatively easy and met with little persistent opposition, which raises questions not just about positions adopted in the post-war period and the issues perceived to be at stake but also about the issues involved in the church conflict.

Predominant interpretations of National Socialism worked not only towards the reintegration of politically compromised pastors but also fitted neatly into the church political fight of the leadership in the post-war period and paved the way for the reintegration of German Christians. In the post-war period, many of the traditions of the preceding period were reasserted. As has already been seen, many churchmen argued that the revival of Germany depended on the rechristianisation of the German people; it was a question of either/or, revival or decline. This had militated against the purge of politically-compromised personalities and similarly militated against too radical a purge of the confessionally-compromised. In Hamburg, Schöffel's main agenda was the confessional consolidation of positive lutheranisation, not so much the rechristianisation as the relutheranisation of society! In this sense, the main enemy was less German Christian or even Thuringian German Christian pastors than theologically liberal pastors. Hence, Schöffel could express regret at the necessary pensioning of one Thuringian German Christian pastor, arguing that he was "im Grunde viel bibelgläubiger, als mancher Liberaler in unserer Kirche."¹⁶² These agendas also explain why German Christian pastors were not deprived of the rights of the clerical position which meant that they could continue to carry out pastoral duties and paved the way for their later rehabilitation.

The reintegration of pastors who had belonged even to radical strains of the German Christian movement raises, of course, questions about the issues that had been at stake in the church conflict. In retrospect we emphasise the racial and anti-Semitic components of the German Christian move-

¹⁶² StA HH, 622-1 Familienarchiv Tügel, Nachlass Franz Tügel, Korrespondenz (unpaginated), Schöffel on Rudolf Kohlenberger in a letter to Tügel of 31 October 1945.

ment. But for most churchmen in the ranks of the Confessing Church the German Christian offence was less that it was anti-Semitic but that it had let the political into the church – just as the Nazi offence was not that it pursued policies that were anti-Semitic; rather, it was the means they adopted to pursue these policies. It was a question of style as much as of content.¹⁶³ As we have seen, over half of Hamburg pastors had been members of the German Christian movement in early 1933, including many who would later be found in the ranks of the church opposition, and many more had supported German Christian ideas, even if they had not joined, to which category Schöffel should be ranked. Some pastors expressed principled support for the ideas they believed the German Christian movement represented even when they left it in support of Schöffel's authority as Bishop in late 1933 and early 1934.¹⁶⁴ Although the fight of the Confessing Church had arisen in protest against the introduction of the 'Aryan paragraph' into the church, Schöffel had deemed this issue relatively unimportant at the time, arguing that the Nazi state did not even want the 'Aryan paragraph' and that it was not necessary: "von sämtlichen Ständen ist keiner so rassistisch rein wie der theologische"¹⁶⁵ – seemingly unprepared to discuss the wider implications of the question. The *Bekennnisgemeinschaft Hamburg* (BG), formally established in May 1934, grew out of the *Pfarrernotbund* established in protest at the introduction of the 'Aryan paragraph' into the church, but it was rooted as much in local events towards the end of 1933 as it was in the national scene. Not least, it was closely linked to Schöffel's efforts to rally support for his position in the face of German Christian pressure in Hamburg and in the Reich, and this at a time when he was still playing a prominent and problematic role in church affairs at a national level and rejected the leadership claims of what he termed "den widerstrebenden Kräften innerhalb der evangelischen Kirche."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ On the church response to the persecution of the Jews see particularly Richard Gutteridge, *Open Thy Mouth for the Dumb! The German Evangelical Church and the Jews 1879–1950*, Oxford 1979; Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent. The Confessing Church and the Jews*, Lincoln/Nebraska 1998.

¹⁶⁴ See Wilhelmi, *Kirche*, p. 110.

¹⁶⁵ Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, vol. 1: *Preliminary History and the Time of Illusion, 1918–1934*, London 1987, p. 96.

¹⁶⁶ Wilhelmi, *Kirche*, p. 106.

Many earnest Confessing Christians were in fact themselves instinctively anti-Semitic, from a religious and a cultural point of view, before, during and after the 'Third Reich'. The idea of the *Volkskirche* had fostered anti-Semitism, particularly from 1917 onwards, with calls for the renewal of Germany through the synthesis of *Volk* and Christianity. Anti-judaistic Christian theology, prominent in Luther, reinforced these views, as did theologies of the orders of creation, which were influential from the Weimar Republic through to the Federal Republic, and were by no means confined to German Christian pastors but were also widespread among confessing churchmen. This had also meant that the majority of pastors had initially welcomed the *Reichskirche*, rejecting it only when they feared that confessional barriers were being eroded. Pastoral rejection of the call for a supra-confessional National Church free of Jewish influence was rooted less in their rejection of the anti-Jewish elements than in the rejection of the anti-doctrinal and supra-confessional elements in the conceptions of radical German Christians. Many wanted a people's church, but this could not, for most, involve the transcendence of confessional barriers.¹⁶⁷

Alongside the anti-judaistic views widespread even among confessing churchmen in Hamburg, cultural anti-Semitic views were also widespread, as can be seen in the tract published in 1922 by the Hamburg pastor Julius Hahn (1880–1956) entitled *Die Judenfrage*.¹⁶⁸ Hahn, who was chairman of the Society for Mission to the Jews in Hamburg, is said to have read the Old Testament in Hebrew once a year; he was involved in measures to help the plight of baptised Jews in the 'Third Reich'. In the 1922 pamphlet he had pointed to the supposed danger represented by Jewish influence in state and school, parliament and press, theatre and literature, parroting contemporary clichés. In 1924, Hahn was even charged with having incited anti-Jewish hatred in a lecture he held on the occasion of the celebrations of the Society for Mission to the Jews.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross. The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, Chapel Hill 1996, p. 112.

¹⁶⁸ Julius Hahn, *Die Judenfrage*, Hamburg 1922. See also Rainer Hering, *Theologie im Spannungsfeld von Kirche und Staat. Die Entstehung der Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät an der Universität Hamburg 1895–1955* (Hamburger Beiträge zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte 12), Berlin – Hamburg 1992, pp. 162–163.

¹⁶⁹ See NEKA, 32.03.01 Personalakten Pastorinnen und Pastoren, Personalakte Julius Hahn, pp. 30–37.

Such factors meant that Nazi policy towards the Jews had met with little pastoral protest and even with much support in the early years of the 'Third Reich'. Clergymen in Hamburg had not offered any resistance to the policies of the state, many of which – including the boycott of Jewish shops, foreign policy and the elimination of socialists and communists from public life – had even found explicit support from pastors involved in the Confessing Church.¹⁷⁰ To give one example, Pastor Julius Heldmann (1887–1950), who was later involved in measures to help the Jews and even interned in the concentration camp at Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen for a short period in 1942, had written a number of articles for the local ecclesiastical press, in which he had supported the purge of Jews from public life in 1933 and had justified the boycott against shops with recourse to typical clichés.¹⁷¹ Heldmann had felt compelled only to speak against “die fanatischen Rachegeister, die das ganze Judentum ausrotten möchten.”¹⁷² Here we see that it was a question of style and extent, but the basic principles of measures against the Jews to exclude these from public life was supported.

In the initial post-war period, the manner in which churchmen confronted questions relating to what most still referred to as “die Judenfrage” reveals serious limitations.¹⁷³ Few theologians and churchmen questioned anti-judaistic theological traditions and the contribution of Christian anti-Semitism to developments that made mass murder possible. There was no specific mention of the guilt incurred by the church towards the Jewish people in the “Stuttgart Guilt Declaration”. The long-awaited “Word on the Jewish Question”, issued by the *Bruderrat* in 1948, was a reassertion of traditional anti-judaistic views, which included the chilling comment: “Daß Gott nicht mit sich spotten läßt, ist die stumme Predigt des jüdischen

¹⁷⁰ See e. g. Michael Reiter, *Christliche Existenz und Sozialer Wandel in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Hamburger Kirchengemeinde in den politischen Auseinandersetzungen der Weimarer Republik und des Dritten Reiches*, PhD Hamburg 1992; Günther Severin, *Jahre einer Gemeinde. Eilbek 1872–1943*, Hamburg 1985. Various articles in the ecclesiastical press lent support to Hitler's policies.

¹⁷¹ Julius Heldmann, *Wunderanfang – herrlich Ende!* In: *Das evangelische Hamburg* 27, 1933, no. 18, pp. 268–270, esp. pp. 268–269.

¹⁷² Julius Heldmann, *Rundschau*, in: *Das evangelische Hamburg* 27, 1933, no. 8, pp. 116–117, here p. 117.

¹⁷³ See Strübel, *Continuity*, pp. 76–84.

Schicksals."¹⁷⁴ Initially, the way ahead in the relationship to the Jews was seen in renewed and intensive mission, for which Hamburg pastors called in articles in the *Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt*.¹⁷⁵ When churchmen made mention of the anti-Jewish policies of the state, they tended to stress their anti-Christian implications.¹⁷⁶

Alongside the reassertion of anti-judaistic theology, there is evidence that cultural anti-Semitism remained potent among churchmen in Hamburg in the period after 1945. When the regional church council discussed the problem of anti-Semitism in 1947, they rejected racial anti-Semitism as non-Christian but seemed to distinguish between racial anti-Semitism and other forms of anti-Semitism, the latter being seen as understandable, not least given the "derart auffallende Lebensart" of Jews from the East who were now settling in Germany, which meant that "schon deswegen, also nicht aus rassistischen Gründen, sich eine erhebliche Abneigung gegen sie geltend mache."¹⁷⁷ This reassertion of anti-judaism and anti-Semitism points to the extent to which the German Christian movement had been an expression of the cultural climate, which made it possible for radical German Christians to be reintegrated in the period after 1945.

For the most part, as Doris Bergen persuasively argues,¹⁷⁸ when churchmen intervened on behalf of pastors who are to us unrepentant Nazis and who had propagated a gospel that was no longer Christian, they saw not someone who had been a member of a party that had sent millions to the death camps and whose theology had justified this, but an idealist whose hopes they had often shared. German Christian influence involved more than institutional domination. Rather, it was in the sphere of ideas that they had been most influential, particularly in the early years. The shared elements of the ecclesiology of the German Christian movement in the 'Third

¹⁷⁴ Ein Wort zur Judenfrage, 8 April 1948, printed in: Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 72–75, 1945–1948, pp. 224–227, here p. 225.

¹⁷⁵ Including the afore-mentioned Julius Hahn. See Julius Hahn, Die Judenfrage, in: Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate (LGB) 2, 1948, no. 15, no pagination.

¹⁷⁶ Strübel, *Continuity*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁷ KKrA HH, Niederschriften über die Sitzungen des Landeskirchenrates, discussion in the 59th sitting of the regional church council 11 December 1947.

¹⁷⁸ Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, particularly last chapter on "Post-war echoes."

Reich' meant, as Bergen suggests, that German Christians could be reintegrated into the church in the late 1940s and 1950s. The idea of the people's church could be used as a rationalisation, the doctrinal and ethical dimensions of their beliefs were played down and the emphasis put on the cultural elements shared by large circles of the church.¹⁷⁹ This meant, for example, that the more repulsive anti-Jewish thoughts were seen merely as theological or pedagogical ideas and their consequences were not considered.¹⁸⁰ The persistence of the German Christian movement was made possible, Bergen continues, by the fact that many of its ideas were embedded in the culture around it.¹⁸¹ In this sense, churchmen reacted in accordance with their worldview, which combined religious, social and political elements in a programme which militated against radical reassessments and a confrontation with the Nazi past in its own ranks, even when these had injured the confessional status of the church.

11 Ecclesiastical opposition to the process of purification in the church and the limited possibilities for its expression

The stances taken towards the denazification of the church were supported by the majority of clergy, from all camps and representing all fronts in the church. Other studies have suggested that the demand for a more thorough denazification of the church came only from the Church Theological Fraternity in Württemberg, which published a tract criticising the positions of the church in the denazification process.¹⁸² The criteria on which it was believed self-purification should be carried out were shared by the vast majority of clergy, encompassing pastors who had adopted different church political positions in the previous period. Here, Hamburg did not in any

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁸² *Kirche und Entnazifizierung. Denkschrift der Kirchlich-Theologischen Sozietät in Württemberg*, ed. by Hermann Diem in cooperation with Paul Schempp and Kurt Müller, Stuttgart 1946.

sense form an exception but merely followed the line of the EKD and the vast majority of other regional churches.

Within the regional church council in Hamburg a more radical line was called for primarily by Volkmar Hertrich and Elisabeth Schulz. The former came from the seminaries of the Confessing Church; the latter was a theologically educated laywoman who stood close to the views of Karl Barth (1886–1968). Schulz, who had sought a career in the educational sector following her theological studies given the lack of opportunities for women in the church at this time,¹⁸³ compared the relative lack of difficulties that, for example, leaving the party had involved for pastors in comparison to teachers during the ‘Third Reich’.¹⁸⁴ Several decisions affecting the self-purification of the church were taken in the absence of these two members or despite their abstentions or votes against.¹⁸⁵

Even here, however, positions were not always consistent. Hertrich intervened on behalf of Joachim Hossenfelder, who had been the co-founder and first *Reichsleiter* of the German Christians, and had been at the centre of the so-called *Sportpalastskandal* in November 1933. In 1935, Hossenfelder had founded the *Kampf- und Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen*, a radical grouping supportive of an ‘Aryan’ and de-judaized ‘National Church.’ Although Hertrich’s efforts to secure Hossenfelder a position in Hamburg were blocked by Schöffel, whose opposition to Hossenfelder in late 1933 had led to his own resignation as Lutheran Minister, Hertrich had negotiated a position for Hossenfelder in Schleswig-Holstein.¹⁸⁶

Indeed, dividing lines were at times perverse: a critical spirit towards the tardiness of the church in reordering itself and purging its ranks was the afore-mentioned judge Enno Budde, former party member and author of tracts on the racial question, later at the centre of a juristic scandal which echoed through the Federal Republic when he refused to open a case

¹⁸³ Hering, Spannungsfeld, p. 224.

¹⁸⁴ NEKA, 32.01 Landeskirchenamt-Kanzlei, B XVIII 45, no. 28, Sitzung des Selbstreinigungsausschusses mit dem Kirchenvorstand Eilbeck-Friedenskirche, 17 November 1947.

¹⁸⁵ As with e. g. Robert Stuewer.

¹⁸⁶ NEKA, 98.07 Nachlass Volkmar Hertrich, 38, letter from Hertrich to Schöffel 10 June 1953, in which he outlined his efforts on Hossenfelder’s behalf and expressed his hope that Hossenfelder would receive a position in Schleswig-Holstein. Should this not be the case, he hoped that it would indeed be possible to find a position for him in Hamburg.

against Friedrich Nieland, author of a rabidly anti-Semitic tract, *Wieviel Welt (Geld)-Kriege müssen die Völker noch verlieren?*¹⁸⁷

The situation, marked by chaos and confusion, was, of course, hardly conducive to critical reassessment or expression of criticism. For a whole number of reasons, the post-war world was “zu rekonstruktionsbestrebt, um große kritische Fragen auszuhalten und aufnehmen zu können. Sie drängte auf kurzfristig wirksame Linderungen akuter Not und ließ beiseite, was diesem Vorhaben hinderlich war.”¹⁸⁸ Responses were “momentsgebunden”.¹⁸⁹ Six years of war had left most churchmen and Germans tired and longing for security. In the course of ‘Operation Gomorrha’ Hamburg had been heavily destroyed – walking through the ruins of the city in July 1943 Hertrich and Witte believed that Hamburg would become a medium-sized town with 200 or 300 000 inhabitants and around 30 pastors after the war!¹⁹⁰ In 1945 only half of the living space available in 1939 was still inhabitable. Entire suburbs had been destroyed. The church had by no means been spared destruction. 50 of the total 65 Protestant churches had been hit in the bombings. 22 churches had been fully – over 80 % – destroyed, a further 6 heavily – up to 80 % – destroyed, 22 had suffered slight destruction. Of 35 parish centres 16 had been fully destroyed, 6 heavily destroyed, 8 slightly and only 5 had escaped damage fully. 44 pastorates had been destroyed; a third of all clergy had been forced to find alternative accommodation.¹⁹¹ In the concrete situation in which ecclesiastical leaders and churchmen found themselves, in the face of hunger and cold, uncertainty about the fate of relatives and loved ones, in the face of the ruins of their city and the battle for mere survival, both spiritual and material rebuilding seemed more important than self-castration and church-political

¹⁸⁷ See footnote 57.

¹⁸⁸ Rudolf von Thadden, Dietrich Bonhoeffer und der deutsche Nachkriegsprotestantismus, in: Armin Boyens / Martin Greschat / Rudolf von Thadden / Paolo Pombeni, *Kirchen in der Nachkriegszeit. Vier zeitgeschichtliche Beiträge (Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte B 8)*, Göttingen 1979, pp. 125–138, here p. 137.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁹⁰ Hartmut Sierig, *Von Freiheit und Liebe. Ein Requiem für Volkmar Hertrich*, in: *Hamburger Kirchenkalender 1960*, pp. 45–56, here p. 50.

¹⁹¹ Simon Schöffel, *Kirchlicher Bericht über die Jahre 1948 bis 1951, Hamburg 1952, Appendices I–V*, pp. 62–66.

squabbling, which was how many saw self-purification. Most congregations agreed and supported their pastors, regardless of the positions adopted in the preceding period. Moreover, as churchmen stressed, they could not, with conviction, follow the path adopted by state authorities and dismiss their brothers without provision for themselves and their families. Should they be dismissed by the military government, with loss of pension entitlements, compromised pastors would be faced with literal ruin.

A critical reassessment of views and attitudes held which had, as suggested, led to the limitations of church 'resistance' in the 'Third Reich' and co-determined the limitations of the confrontation with the preceding period in the initial post-war period, came, as suggested, only later: comparatively peaceful times are more conducive to reflection than times of chaos, which to end to encourage conservative tendencies and continuity rather than reform and change.¹⁹²

12 Conclusion

The issue of denazification in the church is part of a wider problem of the extent to which Germany's middle classes faced up to the *Bewältigung der Vergangenheit* in relation to their own role in the 'Third Reich' and how much continuity there was between the élites that had supported Hitler's regime and those who were integrated into the Federal Republic. As the only group granted the privilege of reordering their own house without, or with only minimal, intervention on the part of the military government, the German churches offer a unique example of the will of the German population, and particularly of national conservative élites, to denazify Germany. On the part of the churches, a mixture of 'prophetic', political and pragmatic reasons prevented a thorough purge of personalities compromised by views held and positions adopted in the period of the 'Third Reich'.

It might, of course, be asked whether the rather lax denazification in the church was not, as in the state, the only option and, despite its moral limita-

¹⁹² Martin Greschat, "Rechristianisierung" und "Säkularisierung". Anmerkungen zu einem europäischen konfessionellen Interpretationsmodell, in: Jochen-Christoph Kaiser / Anselm Doering-Manteuffel (eds.), *Christentum und politische Verantwortung. Kirchen im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Konfession und Gesellschaft 2), Stuttgart – Berlin – Cologne 1990, pp. 1–34, here p. 13.

tions, the option that paved the way for successful democracy with a broad basis of support in the Federal Republic. A more thorough purging of the churches at the hands of the military government might have made compromised pastors even more popular as martyrs and given them the opportunity to exercise the sort of anti-democratic influence so many pastors had in the Weimar Republic. The developments of the later period, the economic miracle and the identity forged with the Federal Republic as a result of anti-communism in the Cold War era, deprived them of the bases for support which might have been exploited to destabilise the Second Republic. On the other hand, the manner in which the church faced up to the Nazi legacy in its ranks was of course a question of historical justice and the credibility of the church, which were later questioned with such intensity.

The consequences of the failure to purge the church and the integration of churchmen compromised on account of the political and/or confessional standpoints they had adopted in the 'Third Reich', as well as the discontinuities that existed alongside the continuities established, would be, however, another chapter.